Derrida's Return to Freud
From Phenomenology to Politics

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford

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Abstract

This thesis identifies and explores a 'return to Freud' in the work of Jacques Derrida. Resemblances between Derrida's method of deconstruction and the therapeutic procedure of psychoanalysis have long been a source of debate among critics. Is deconstruction little more than a psychoanalytic reading of the history of philosophy, or is Freud a Derridean *avant la lettre*? Challenging major interpreters of Derrida such as Jonathan Culler and Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak, I reveal this dilemma to be a false one. By developing Derrida's well-known yet little understood concept of *différance*, I show how this alternative stems from an inadequate understanding of Derrida's treatment of time. The structure of temporality implied by *différance* entails that the meaning of the past is continually reconstituted in its relationship to an ever-evolving present. Far from dissolving the importance of Freud's contribution, this structure allows Derrida to circumvent nebulous notions of 'influence' and 'indebtedness' while still engaging psychoanalysis as a key theoretical resource in his own project of deconstruction.

A productive engagement with psychoanalytic theory can thus be seen to inform every major stage of the philosopher's career, from his early phenomenological work to his later reflections on the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Derrida repeatedly turns to Freud as a crucial interlocutor in interrogating a number of philosophical problems encountered in his own work. These problems include the nature of time, space, and memory; the role of the fictive in scientific discourse; the question of the archive; the interdependence of the psyche and technology; and the relationship between politics and the unconscious. At a theoretical level, I provide a detailed account of Derrida's notion of spacing, arguing that the unconditional belatedness entailed by *différance* calls us to a difficult, dual responsibility: both towards the legator of an inheritance (that is, towards the textual legacy Freud has bequeathed to us) and towards the unforeseeable future contexts in which this inheritance will require transformation. The discourse of deconstruction, I conclude, enacts a careful negotiation of these two demands.

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Long Abstract

This thesis identifies and explores a 'return to Freud' in the work of Jacques Derrida. It traces a productive engagement with psychoanalytic theory spanning the breadth of the philosopher's career, from his early writings on phenomenology to his later reflection on the events of September 11. Resemblances between Derrida's method of deconstruction and the therapeutic procedure of psychoanalysis have been a recurring source of debate amongst critics. Is deconstruction merely a psychoanalytic reading of the history of philosophy, or is Freud a Derridean avant la lettre? An apparent ambivalence on Derrida's part towards these resemblances has led some commentators to posit a psychobiographical disavowal of his own indebtedness to Freud. This study moves beyond such approaches by showing how Derrida's ambivalence towards Freud is consistent with his treatment of *différance* as a process of spacing. The movement of spacing entails that a textual legacy is always already affected by an irreducible belatedness. While this structural delay ensures that a legacy such as Freud's is always inadequate to the context in which it finds itself interpreted, spacing also renders possible the survival and productivity of an inheritance, as a legacy is ceaselessly inscribed in new and unpredictable contexts in which it both undergoes and requires transformation. In this way, Derrida's work can be read as one example of the continuing modification of Freud's legacy today, as psychoanalytic theory is called to respond to a series of new contexts

—scientific, technological, political, etc.—which were structurally unforeseeable to Freud.

Rejecting oppositional accounts of Freud as a 'precursor' or 'antagonist' of deconstruction, this thesis highlights the function of psychoanalysis as a theoretical resource in Derrida's project of deconstruction, one which is indebted to the metaphysics of presence at the same time that it constitutes a decisive step in the deconstruction of the latter. Identifying Freud as a privileged interlocutor of Derrida opens new ground in the ongoing interpretation of the philosopher's work. It reveals a neglected concern on Derrida's part for the intersections of language, truth, and logic (Chapter 1); it exposes a rigorous attention to key problems in the philosophy of science (Chapter 2); and it highlights a careful consideration of the role that psychoanalysis might play in understanding a number of pressing political issues (Chapter 5). It also sheds light on Derrida's account of *différance* as a movement of simultaneous mastery and impotence (Chapter 4) and on his discussion of the archive and its relationship to intellectual 'influence' more generally (Chapter 3). In positing a return to Freud in Derrida's writings, this thesis provides a nuanced framework for understanding the 'problematic proximity' (Bennington 2000) of both thinkers and in doing so draws a number of conclusions of importance not only for the interpretation of Derrida's work but also for the continuing vitality of psychoanalytic theory today.

This thesis represents the first full-length study of Freud's role in the development of Derrida's project of deconstruction. Existing work on the theoretical convergences of deconstruction and psychoanalysis has yielded three book-length studies of Derrida and Lacan (Major 2001; Hurst 2008; Lewis 2008). While numerous shorter accounts of the relationship between Derrida and Freud have been forthcoming (Introduction, iv), close attention to Derrida's theory of spacing reveals a number of difficulties in their interpretation

of the relationship between both thinkers. This thesis argues that the unconditional belatedness signaled by spacing provides a more consistent framework for understanding Derrida's persistent ambivalence towards with Freud, thus problematising previous accounts of his quasi-psychoanalytic disavowal of the influence of psychoanalysis (Spivak 1997; Trumbull 2012) and periodisations of Derrida's work in which he alternately rejects and embraces psychoanalysis (Howells 1998; Ellmann 2000). The former view encourages reflection on the psychoanalytic 'origins' of Derrida's methodological procedure (Spivak 1997), a gesture which is inconsistent with Derrida's account of the 'incalculability' of every origin. The structure of temporality implied by spacing, in which the meaning of the past is continually reconstituted in its relationship to an ever-shifting present, cautions us against interpreting Freud as a Derridean avant la lettre (Culler 2007) and instead destabilises the meaning of Freud's legacy as something irreducibly vulnerable to future reinterpretation.

The purpose of the Introduction is twofold. First, it offers a preliminary account of several concepts central to Derrida's theoretical matrix and which will be developed as the thesis progresses. In particular, it examines the process of spacing (iii.3), the concept of the trace (i.2), and the problem of aporia (ii), in addition to lesser known Derridean themes such as jealousy (i.2), myth, and fiction (iii). Second, the Introduction situates Derrida's turn to psychoanalysis as a resource within the more general context of Freud's reception in postwar French intellectual life, both by analysts (such as Lacan, iii.2) and by non-analysts such as Lévi-Strauss (i.1), Foucault (ii), and Sartre (iii.1). Both aims are interdependent, however, with the specificity of Derrida's reception of Freud lying in his unwillingness to reduce the latter's contribution to a single, timeless significance—a reluctance which stems from Derrida's account of aporia, spacing, and the trace. For Derrida, the significance of psychoanalysis cannot be reduced to a single mythological origin (or 'creation myth') but is instead irreducibly plural and thus susceptible to incalculable revision in the future. This

situation of plurality is what authorises Derrida's inheritance of psychoanalysis in his own strategy of deconstruction (iii.3).

Chapter 1 traces this inheritance of Freud to Derrida's earliest phenomenological work. A reading of 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' (1966) reveals the text's antagonism of the figures of Husserl and Freud, one which can be found to a greater or lesser degree in all of Derrida's writings on phenomenology (1954-1967). Although remaining hugely determined by its belonging to the metaphysics of presence, for Derrida the 'percée freudienne' represents a decisive stage in the deconstruction of the latter. Following a brief account of Derrida's phenomenological work (1.i), this chapter identifies two ways in which Freud's writings complicate the traditional urgency accorded to presence in Western metaphysics. First, Derrida's reading of Freud's early, abandoned 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895) reveals the latter's tacit awareness of temporal and spatial presence as indiscrete categories (1.ii), one in stark contrast to phenomenology's fundamental dissociation of time and space (1.i.2). Second, this chapter argues that Derrida's analysis of Freud's treatment of language, logic, and time in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) must be measured against Husserl's theory of linguistic ideality (1.iii). A comparison between Freud's analysis of the 'grammar' of the dreamwork and Husserl's emphasis on 'pure logical grammar' is advantageous because it foregrounds the resistance of psychoanalysis to certain logocentric ideals of the metaphysics of presence.

This adversarial coupling of Husserl and Freud in Derrida's work is taken up again in Chapter 2, which contrasts Husserl's philosophy of science with Freud's concept of 'speculation' (*Spekulation*), a confrontation which plays a key role in Derrida's 1980 text, 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'. This chapter clarifies Derrida's interest in Freudian speculation by showing how the latter notion problematises phenomenology's treatment of scientific enquiry as founded on two fundamental requirements: an origin in immediate sense-experience

(*archē*) and a shared scientific concern for the 'infinite task' of reason (*telos*) (2.i.2). Developing the concept of 'fiction' touched on in the Introduction (iii), it shows how Derrida's analysis of Freudian speculation highlights an irreducible implication of the scientific and the fictional, an imbrication which Freud sometimes takes account of and which is critical to Derrida's deconstructive reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2.ii; 2.iii). Derrida's interrogation of the scientific credentials of psychoanalysis provides an important means of engaging his work with problems in the philosophy of science, an engagement at odds with traditional representations of his work as anti- or a-scientific.

Chapter 3 offers a reading of *Mal d'archive* (1995) as a text in which Derrida reflects extensively on the influence of psychoanalysis on deconstruction. While previous responses to the text have stressed its importance for the reception of postmodernism within archival studies, I argue that the book's subtitle ('une impression freudienne') signals Derrida's explicit theorisation of his own reception of Freud. This chapter explores the text's deployment of two financial figures which continue to shape contemporary discourse on the archive: 'debt' and 'inheritance'. Derrida's reading of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses* (1993) exposes the historian's reliance on a 'classical' concept of the archive as the depository of a self-identical past, a concept which underpins Yerushalmi's thesis of Freud's unpaid debt to his Jewish upbringing (3.i). This conception gives rise to numerous aporias identified in Derrida's analysis of Yerushalmi's methodological procedure. A more positive and productive notion of inheritance, however, characterises Derrida's relationship to Freud, allowing him to shift the terms of the debate from an apparently calculable indebtedness to the past towards an incalculable inheritance for the future (3.ii). This is achieved through the key notion of 'impression', which I read as an exploration of Derrida's own inheritance of psychoanalytic theory (for example, in his conception of our collective *mal d'archive* as an irrepressible drive to archive) (3.ii.2). In this sense, *Mal d'archive* represents less a positive

turn in Derrida's attitude towards psychoanalysis than a close theoretical interrogation of an inheritance of psychoanalysis that is already evident in his early work (see Chapters 1 and 2).

My fourth chapter returns to Derrida's reading of Freud in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud" ' in order to clarify his account of *différance* as spacing. Interpreting *différance* as a dynamic movement of simultaneous impotence (temporisation) and mastery (spatialisation) (4.ii), this chapter traces Derrida's development of Freud's model of psychical mastery in aid of his own theory of mastery as the spatialising movement of *différance* (4.iii). For Derrida, Freud's discussion of the relationship between mastery and the 'binding' (*Bindung*) of psychical energy considerably complicates the psychoanalyst's position within a metaphysical tradition stretching from Plato to Husserl (4.i.1) and which consists in exteriorising death from the purity of the living. Building on the earlier analysis of spacing (1.i.1), this chapter offers a close analysis of Derrida's reading of the famous game of *fort-da* described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In Derrida's reading, the latter stages a scene of writing (or 'autoaffection') in which notions of mastery, technics, and *différance* are shown to be inextricably interwoven (4.iii.1).

The final chapter develops this relationship between mastery and technics in a reading of Derrida's later, more political writings. In doing so, it draws attention to the pivotal yet neglected role of psychoanalytic theory in Derrida's post-9/11 work. I show how these later texts explicitly advocate a return to Freudian psychoanalysis as a strategic resource for understanding a number of issues in the contemporary political sphere: notably, the importance of notions of anxiety, terror, and trauma in informing contemporary political discourses on terrorism (5.i; 5.ii), the potential role of psychoanalytic concepts of paranoia and projection in interpreting the pre- and post-9/11 relationship between Western allies and so-called 'rogue states' (5.iii), and the compulsive repetition which characterised much media coverage of the traumatic events of September 11 (5.iv.1). The previous chapter's analysis of

technics is here brought into alignment with Derrida's late discussion of the Enlightenment heritage of calculation and reason (*ratio*) (5.iv.2). The chapter concludes by highlighting Derrida's interrogation of the ambivalent role of psychoanalysis within this tradition, an ambivalence which echoes Derrida's own equivocal use of Freud in his reflections on contemporary politics and indeed more generally.

A tripartite conclusion recapitulates and mobilises the analyses of the preceding chapters. First, it draws together the previous six chapters in identifying a common theoretical framework underpinning not only Derrida's discussion of psychoanalysis but also all of the intellectual discourses to which he is an heir. This framework consists of three distinct but interrelated elements: inheritance, spacing, and responsibility. Second, it argues that Freudian psychoanalysis demands a privileged position amongst these discourses because psychoanalysis provides much of the theoretical impetus for Derrida's account of inheritance: in particular, concepts of indebtedness and disavowal, paternal authority and right, and related notions of spectrality, mourning, and the uncanny. Finally, this thesis concludes with a speculative account of the recent reception of Derrida's legacy and argues that our reception of Derrida's work should be brought into closer alignment with his own account of an irreducible aporia at stake in every act of inheritance: our responsibility towards the traces that have been left to us and, at the same time, our responsibility towards the incalculable futures in which these traces require transformation.

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Over the years, the ideas expressed in this thesis have profited greatly from exchanges with a number of people. The project was first conceived as a Masters student at the University of Cambridge under the guidance of Martin Crowley. At Oxford, early drafts of thesis chapters were commented on in detail by Michael Holland and Gerald Moore. I am particularly grateful to my examiners, Colin Davis and Ian Maclachlan, for their scrupulous reading of the thesis and their many suggestions for potential improvement. Academic support was provided in other ways by Sophie Marnette and Richard Scholar. Productive discussion and debate was forthcoming throughout from Ruth Bush, Eimear Crowe, Rory Devine, Samuel Ferguson, Andrew Hay, Jan Machielsen, Ronald Mendoza-de Jésus, Yasmine Richardson, and Helena Taylor. I would also like to thank the Oxford Psychoanalysis Reading Group (in particular Gerry Byrne) and the Critical Theory Group for providing a platform to experiment with some of the ideas presented here. Gregory Messenger was kind enough to read through the manuscript in its entirety and suggest a number of important changes. This thesis would not exist without the generosity of Martin Foley, to whom I owe a special word of thanks.

This work has been for my parents, Ciarán and Mary, with love and gratitude for their unfailing support.

A Note on References, Translations, and Abbreviations

All works are referred to using the author-date system. The only exceptions are the abbreviated forms given below and standard texts (such as the works of Plato and Aristotle) where it is appropriate to follow the conventional mode of reference. Translations are provided for all quotations, with the exception of those in French. In the case of classical texts I cite the classical Greek in its Latin transliteration and in its English translation.

For convenience and consistency, I have used Strachey's *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* throughout, although I have liberally cited Freud's German in cases where Strachey's rendering is inadequate to the context or might otherwise lead to confusion. I have made a small number of silent modifications to Strachey's Freud in keeping with standard practice: 'psycho-analysis' has been changed to 'psychoanalysis'; 'instinct' has been altered to 'drive' (*Trieb*) but retained in those cases where Freud suggests a purely biological urge (*Instinkt*); 'cathexis' has been kept for *Besetzung*; *Bahnung*, rendered as 'facilitation' by Strachey, has been translated as 'breaching' to preserve the word's connotations of space and violence.

I use the following abbreviated forms:

WORKS BY JACQUES DERRIDA

A	*Apories: mourir—s'attendre aux 'limites de la vérité'* (Paris: Galilée, 1996).
AV	*Apprendre à vivre enfin. Entretien avec Jean Birnbaum* (Paris: Galilée, 2005).
BS	*La Bête et le souverain*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Galilée, 2008).
C	*Le 'concept' du 11 septembre. Dialogues à New York (octobre-décembre 2001)* (Paris: Galilée, 2003).
CP	*La Carte postale. De Socrates à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980).
D	*La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).
DP	*Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990).
DQD	(with Elisabeth Roudinesco) *De quoi demain... Dialogue* (Paris: Fayard-Galilée, 2001).

DT	*Donner le temps*. *1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991).
E	(with Bernard Stiegler) *Echographies de la télévision* (Paris: Galilée/Institut national de l'audiovisuel, 1996).
EAP	*Etats d'âme de la psychanalyse. L'impossible au-delà d'une souveraine cruauté* (Paris: Galilée, 2000).
ED	*L'Ecriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).
FS	*Foi et Savoir* (Paris: Seuil, 2000; first edn. 1996).
G	*De la grammatologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).
Gl	*Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974).
IOG	*L'Origine de la géométrie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990; first edn. 1962).
LT	*Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Galilée, 2000).
MS	*Marx & Sons* (Paris: Galilée/Presses Universitaires de France, 2002).
P	*Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972).
PA	*Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).
PDL	'Préjugés devant la loi' in François Lyotard et al., *La Faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).
PG	*Le Problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010; first edn. 1990).
PM	*Papier Machine. Le ruban de machine à ecrire et autres réponses* (Paris: Galilée, 2001).
PR	*Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 2003; first edn. 1986).
PS	*Points de suspension*: *Entretiens* (Paris: Galilée, 1992).
PSY	*Psyché*. *Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1998; first edn. 1987; second vol. 2003).
R	*Résistances de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Galilée, 1996).
SM	*Spectres de Marx*. *L'Etat de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).
V	*Voyous*. *Deux essais sur la raison* (Paris: Galilée, 2003).
VP	*La Voix et le phénomène. Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967).
AL	*Acts of Literature* (ed. Derek Attridge) (London & New York: Routledge, 1992).

WORKS BY SIGMUND FREUD

GW	*Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet* (18 vols.; ed. Anna Freud et al) (London: Imago Publishing, 1940-52).
BWF	*Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1905* (ed. Jeffrey Masson, Michael Schröter, and Gerhard Fichtner) (Frankfurt am Main: F. Fischer, 1986).
SE	*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 vols.; tr. and ed. James Strachey with H. Freud, A. Strachey, and A. Tyson) (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74).

LWF	*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, 1887-1904 (tr. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson) (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985).

WORKS BY EDMUND HUSSERL

HUA	*Gesammelte Werke*. *Husserliana* (Dordrecht: Kluwer [now Springer], 1956-).
CES	*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (tr. David Carr) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
CM	*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (tr. Dorian Cairns) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).
I1	*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (tr. F. Kersten) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998).
LI	*Logical Investigations* (2 vols; tr. J. N. Findlay and ed. Dermot Moran) (London & New York: Routledge, 2001).
PCIT	*On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893-1917) (tr. John Barnett Brough) (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1991).

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*.
LSJ	*Liddel, Scott, Jones Ancient Greek Lexicon*.
LPR	*Le Petit Robert.*

Introduction
Creation Myths

To speak of a 'return to Freud' in Derrida's work is a dangerous enterprise. On the one hand, the phrase suggests a certain illicitness: Derrida's trespassing on the terrain of his near contemporary, Jacques Lacan. It risks conflating the projects of both thinkers and ignoring the personal and intellectual clashes which marked their acquaintance.[1] If Derrida's gesture always consists in complication, how can deconstruction be equated with Lacan's goal of unifying Freud's legacy? On the other hand, the phrase seems to run contrary to one of Derrida's most fundamental claims. How can we justify speaking of a Derridean return to Freud when deconstruction begins by questioning the very possibility of a return to origins?

I believe that the notion of a return to Freud in Derrida's writings is justifiable and the aim of this thesis is to provide such justification. In this introductory chapter I will respond to these two reservations—the first historical, the second theoretical—and argue that the notion of a return to Freud on Derrida's part is not only defensible but is in several respects long overdue. To claim that Lacan is the greatest psychoanalytic thinker since Freud is both to utter a commonplace and to recognise that Lacan was, for almost four decades, *the* giant of the French psychoanalytic stage. As Sherry Turkle has argued in her sociological history of Freud's French reception, so pervasive was the 'Lacanian mythology' in postwar French culture that even those who disagreed with Lacan could only do so from within a 'Lacanian space'.[2] As her study shows, within such a space the oxygen of publicity was a scarce resource. The success of the Lacanian school depended to a large extent on its ability to exclude competing interpretations of Freud's legacy. The historian Elisabeth Roudinesco has spent much of her career documenting the personal jealousies that have marred the history of

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[1] These are recounted in Derrida's essay, 'Pour l'amour de Lacan' (*R*, 55-88).

[2] Turkle 1992: xxvi.

French *freudisme*.[3] Her monumental *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* provides numerous examples of the strategies of exclusion and assimilation employed by members of the Lacanian school. Lacan's position as Freud's preeminent heir was entrenched, she shows, in two ways: spirited accusations of betrayal (his denunciation of the 'American' ego-psychology of Rudolph Loewenstein and Heinz Hartmann) and aggressive allegations of plagiarism (levelled against Ricoeur and Derrida, for example).[4]

The pervasiveness of this 'Lacanian mythology' has tended to obscure the diversity of engagement with Freud's work during this period. The significance of Ricoeur's *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (1965), for example, a 500-page treatise on the genesis and structure of Freud's conceptual framework, was undeniably eclipsed by the publication, a year later, of Lacan's *Ecrits*. That the publication of these *Ecrits* represented one of the most significant watersheds in the history of psychoanalysis in France is unquestionable. What I am suggesting is that this text continues to cast a long shadow over the reception of Freud's work in France. Derrida's engagement with Freud's legacy is illustrative of this overshadowing. Although a considerable number of Derrida's publications engage with Freud's work in some form or another, he devotes just two essays to the writings of Lacan.[5] In spite of this paucity, each of the major book-length studies of deconstruction and psychoanalysis explore this relationship from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, as though Freud's influence could adequately be conveyed through its Lacanian reinterpretation alone.[6]

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[3] For a concise account of the schisms that have divided French psychoanalytic institutions, see Roudinesco 2006.

[4] On Lacan and Ricoeur's personal acquaintance, see Roudinesco 2009: 1091-101. Lacan's relationship with Derrida will be examined later in this chapter (iii.3).

[5] Geoffrey Bennington (2000: 95) speculates that Derrida has made more 'declarations' on psychoanalysis than on any other movement. Of Derrida's texts on Freud, the most important are: 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' (1966) ; *La Carte postale* (1980); *Mal d'archive* (1995); *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (1996); and *Etats d'âme de la psychanalyse* (2000). In addition to these longer studies, there are a significant number of shorter essays and interviews on Freudian themes, as well as one unpublished seminar on psychoanalysis and literary criticism, 'La Psychanalyse dans le texte' (1971). Derrida's most extensive writings on Lacan are 'Le Facteur de la vérité' (*CP*, 439-524) and a shorter, more anecdotal essay, 'Pour l'amour de Lacan' (*R*, 55-88).

[6] Major 2001; Hurst 2008; Lewis 2008.

One could justify speaking of a Derridean 'return to Freud' in the context of this historical and critical imbalance alone. The locution, however, raises a second problem of an entirely different order. If deconstruction consists in questioning the possibility of an authentic origin, is it legitimate to speak of a 'return' to the Freudian letter in Derrida's writings? Provided that the notion of 'return' (*retour*) is understood in the specific sense attributed to it by Derrida, I argue that it is both possible and legitimate to do so. Although this introductory chapter as a whole aims to clarify the theoretical problems surrounding a 'return' to the past—issues which cluster, as we shall see, around Derrida's notion of spacing (*espacement*)—, these problems can briefly be summarised as follows. The process of spacing entails that the past cannot be reawakened without plurality and self-difference. Indeed, the concept of spacing enjoins us to think the trace of the past as something that was never self-identical, unequivocal, or undivided in the first place. At the same time, this unconditional spacing involves a call to responsibility: a responsibility towards the author of these past traces *and* towards the future contexts in which these traces will find themselves inscribed. For Derrida, the difficulty of inheriting from an intellectual legacy is located at the intersection of these Janus-like poles, one looking to the past, the other to the future. His account of spacing aims at demonstrating why every turn towards the past (*retour*) involves a simultaneous turning away from this past (*détournement*). Paradoxically, this *détournement* both threatens the existence of a legacy at the same time that it facilitates its survival. As will become clearer as this thesis develops, in Derrida's view the endurance of a discourse such as psychoanalysis is conditional on its adaptability to new and unforeseen contexts, on its ability to take account of the spacing that separates its 'original' situation (fin-de-siècle Vienna) from the contemporary context in which it finds itself inscribed (the era of globalisation and Twitter).

While each of the five chapters of this thesis explore a specific example of Derrida's return to Freud's legacy as a resource for his own project of deconstruction, the focus of this introductory chapter is primarily contextual and theoretical. In examining the intellectual context of Derrida's reading of Freud, it aims to establish the specificity of his engagement with psychoanalysis vis-à-vis contemporaries and near-contemporaries such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jacques Lacan. The purpose of this Introduction is not to provide an objective historical account of the reception of Freudian psychoanalysis in France,[7] but rather to suggest how some of Derrida's key concepts can shed light on the tumultuous history of this reception.

i. Jealous Pottery

1. Lévi-Strauss and Psychoanalysis

Claude Lévi-Strauss begins one of his lesser known works, *La Potière jalouse* (1985), with a puzzle. 'Que peut-il y avoir de commun entre un oiseau—l'Engoulevent—l'art de la poterie, et la jalousie conjugale?'.[8] Although this puzzle presents few problems for the structural anthropologist, the methodology leading to its resolution proves less straightforward. Taking a number of creation myths described by South America Jivaro tribes as its point of departure, *La Potière jalouse* traces the persistent association of images of birds, pottery, and marriage in a number of tribal cultures across the globe. In posing the question of the universality of these images, Lévi-Strauss aims at uncovering their latent 'armature': the logical infrastructure which renders them meaningful to the human mind and which therefore explains their compulsive repetition across diverse cultures and historical periods.[9]

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[7] For such an account see Mordier 1981; Turkle 1992; Dosse 1995; Roudinesco 2009.

[8] Lévi-Strauss 1985: 'Prière d'insérer'.

[9] Lévi-Strauss 1985: 22. 'Ils n'acquièrent une signification que dans la mesure où s'établissent entre eux des rapports' (1985: 258).

As Lévi-Strauss's analysis develops, however, one methodological difficulty becomes increasingly pressing. This problem relates to a priority dispute between anthropology and psychoanalysis. Positioning himself in a relationship of rivalry to Freud, Lévi-Strauss argues that the anthropologist and the psychoanalyst approach the interpretation of myth in ways which are ultimately irreconcilable. Unlike Freud, whose method pursues an Oedipal master-code at work beneath every mythic specimen, Lévi-Strauss claims that there is no final 'truth' of myth. Instead, he argues, mythic thought operates according to a non-hierarchical sequence of 'plusieurs codes'.[10] According to this view, the Oedipal account of childhood development represents just one more addition to a series of myths which already includes Sophoclean and Shakespearean 'versions' and all of which are structured by the same underlying logical relations.

In making this claim, Lévi-Strauss aims at reducing psychoanalysis to an object of structural anthropology, rather than the intellectual climate out of which it speaks. In his hasty dismissal of the psychoanalyst's resort to 'explications passe-partout', 'toutes sortes de considérations sur la petite enfance', Lévi-Strauss can be said to become like the jealous potter of his title, carefully guarding the originality of his own creative method against the threat of competing approaches.[11] The stridency of his denial of a debt to psychoanalysis is nonetheless complicated in several respects. Theoretical difficulties arise, for instance, when Lévi-Strauss describes a particular 'commutation' (a term roughly synonymous with 'code' or 'coding') critical to his structural study of pottery myths. This *commutation* concerns the stress placed by certain myths on logical relations of orality and anality (e.g., attributes of incontinence or retention exhibited by gods, men, and the natural world). Lévi-Strauss argues that there is an intrinsic relationship between anality and retention in the making of pottery; like the body, he reasons, a clay pot can be described as a vessel containing food. His recourse

[10] Lévi-Strauss 1985: 246

[11] Lévi-Strauss 1985: 231.

to an inherent relationship between anality and retentiveness, however, poses a methodological dilemma: how can he both dismiss the psychoanalytic theory of myth and dream interpretation (by reducing it to just one more element in a larger chain), while also making use of a number of concepts (orality, anality) crucial to Freud's account of childhood development?

This difficulty is compounded by Lévi-Strauss's unwillingness to recognise *any* originality in the conclusions of psychoanalysis. This aversion forces Lévi-Strauss to defend a thesis that is at best unreflective and at worst absurd. If certain surface-level similarities exist between psychoanalytic and Jivaro cultures, he claims, it is not because psychoanalytic notions have been projected onto the experiences of the Jivaro tribe. Instead, in a chapter entitled '"Totem et tabou": version Jivaro', Lévi-Strauss argues these similarities exist because psychoanalysis was already known to these tribal peoples. This hypothesis explains why their mythologies abound with quasi-Oedipal family romances. Moreover, among members of the Jivaro tribe, the omnipresent figure of the shaman plays a role analogous to that of a psychoanalyst. These two observations allow Lévi-Strauss to conclude that psychoanalysis was in fact *invented* by tribes such as the Jivaro: 'nous avons rencontré sous forme parfaitement explicite des notions et des catégories—telles celles de caractère oral et de caractère anal—que les psychanalystes ne pourront prétendre avoir découvertes: ils n'ont fait que les *re*trouver'.[12] This conclusion satisfies Lévi-Strauss's dual aim of undoing the vertical hierarchy of myth interpretation (interpretations such as Freud's are just as 'mythic' as the myths they claim to decipher) and of excluding any possibility of an influence of psychoanalytic methodology on the procedure of the structuralist anthropologist.

[12] Lévi-Strauss 1985: 243 (my italics).

2. Derrida: Jealousy and Pottery

Derrida's work can provide us with a useful theoretical framework for understanding Lévi-Strauss's ambivalence towards psychoanalysis in *La Potière jalouse*. That deconstruction involves a sustained reflection on the problems of inheriting a legacy is clear from its conceptual apparatus alone, in which notions such as writing and the trace, debt and inheritance, repetition and difference play a critical role in Derrida's investigation of Western metaphysics. While I will develop Derrida's understanding of these concepts throughout this thesis, I will focus here on how Derrida's thinking of the trace can be used to clarify Lévi-Strauss's equivocal relationship to Freud.

In *De la grammatologie* (1967), Derrida claims that the trace signifies an ambiguous 'présence-absence', that is, an inscription which is both absent and present at the same time (*G*, 103). The resonance of the French word *trace* is important here as it suggests both the residue of a just-vanished entity and the attempt to trace, to track, or to hunt (*tracer*) this abdicated presence. For Derrida, such a hunt will always end in failure because presence, in its spatial and temporal senses, is always deferred by an irreducible movement of spacing. The concept of the trace begins by calling into question the possibility of values such as absolute presence and absolute absence. The notion of 'full' presence, Derrida argues, can function only as an ideal fiction because the present is never fully 'present' as such but is always an effect of difference. It is therefore dependent on a differential relationship to what is not 'present': the past and the future. Since the past and the future are no more immutable than the present moment but are themselves caught up in a differential relationship to each other, the present can never be 'present' in a punctual moment of presence. It is always divided against itself, always threatened by plurality and contradiction.

The concepts of the trace and of spacing will be examined at greater length in Chapter 1 (i.1). For the moment, my aim is to explore some ways in which Derrida's conception of the

trace as the residue of a deferred presence can illuminate the French reception of Freud's work. Our structural inability to pin the trace down, to return to the mythical moment in which an author's intentions are still present in an inscription, allows us to interpret Lévi-Strauss's ambivalence towards Freud in terms of a strategy of jealousy. In this view, the irreducibility of spacing is what produces Lévi-Strauss's jealous desire both to protect the originality of the anthropologist's method and to establish the total absence of any psychoanalytic influence. Despite Lévi-Strauss's efforts, we saw, the influence of psychoanalysis's conceptual apparatus can never be entirely discounted, or absented, from his discourse. This spectral structure of inheritance—it is impossible to reawaken Freud's 'original' intentions as they once were (in a moment of full presence), just as it is impossible to extricate ourselves entirely from his legacy (in a moment of full absence)—is what gives rise to the rivalry that is the most striking and recurrent feature of Freud's reception in France.

The ordinary meaning of the word 'jealousy' offers a clue as to how Derrida's work can illuminate the jealous schisms that have characterised the history of French psychoanalysis. Jealousy habitually refers to the desire to possess something one does not possess (an achievement, an object, a person) *and* the desire to retain sole possession over something one already owns (to jealously protect one's entitlements, for example).[13] Jealousy is thus marked by an ambivalent play of presence and absence since in order for possessive desire to exist it is necessary that the desired object be jealously guarded by another. In this sense, jealousy can be described as a response to the differential play of the trace, which Derrida describes as both facilitating and undoing the metaphysical opposition between total presence and total absence. Although Derrida does not write extensively on the motif of jealousy, he does associate it on a number of occasions with his thinking of the trace.[14] In

[13] Lévi-Strauss defines jealousy in similar terms: 'un sentiment résultant du désir de retenir une chose ou un être qu'on vous arrache, ou bien de posséder une chose ou un être qu'on n'a pas' (1985: 229).

[14] In an article on Lévinas, Derrida claims that 'dans tout ce dont je parle, il y va de la jalousie' (*PSY*, 201).

Glas (1974), for instance, 'l'opération jalouse' is linked to the trace and to that which cannot be presented: 'ne pas voir ce qu'on voit, voir ce qu'on ne peut pas voir et qui ne peut pas se présenter, telle est l'opération jalouse. Elle a toujours affaire à de la trace'. Jealousy is one response to the unconditional structure of the trace: 'la pensée de la trace serait donc une pensée jalouse' (*Gl*, 240). In *Apories*, a text we shall return to later in this Introduction (ii), Derrida speaks of 'le *principe même de la jalousie*' as a desire for exclusivity, possession, and ownership, a 'passion primitive de la propriété et comme souci du propre' (*A*, 18). In each of these cases, jealousy is conceived in terms of a desire to master what cannot by definition be mastered: spacing as the irreducible *écart* which introduces plurality in our interpretation of the trace.

In these terms, Lévi-Strauss's attempt to exorcise the spectre of psychoanalysis can be interpreted as a jealous desire to appropriate traits of the Freudian legacy while protecting the purity of his own anthropological discourse. At the same time, jealousy also consists in desiring exclusive possession of a legacy, in desiring to be, for example, 'le premier *après Freud* et donc seul avec Freud' (*MA*, 90). The originality of Derrida's thinking of inheritance, I argue, lies in his unwillingness to associate the survival of an intellectual legacy with the jealous appropriation of its meaning for oneself. In this sense, the notion of a *potière jalouse* could only be pleonastic for Derrida because every act of creation is always marked by a desire to appropriate the trace and thus by a certain spirit of jealousy.

While Lévi-Strauss stresses the formless character of the potter's clay prior to its shaping, Derrida has little faith in the 'originality' of what is shaped by the potter.[15] Derrida's thinking of the trace suggests that there can be no act of creation that is purely *original*, in the dual sense of the term (as something which is primary and creative). Only a God withdrawn

[15] 'Que l'argile à poterie se présente d'abord à l'état informe, que le travail du potier ou de la potière consiste précisément à imposer une forme à une matière, qui, au départ, en était totalement dépourvue, on l'admettra sans peine' (Lévi-Strauss 1985: 29).

from temporal finitude, he argues, could be 'exempt de toute jalousie, de tout désir de possession, de garde, de propriété, d'exclusivité' (*PSY*, 201). Or, as he phrases it in a later text on psychoanalysis: 'qui, fors Dieu, a jamais créé, ce qui s'appelle créé, un concept?' (*R*, 33).

One way of understanding Derrida's suspicion of traditional notions of creativity and originality is to examine references to artistic creation in his work. As Michael Naas has noted, Derrida's writings abound with references to the potter's craft and to images of the construction of urns, vessels, and other containers.[16] A brief comparison of the work of the potter and the philosopher at the beginning of *Voyous* (2003) suggests why the notion of creation is so problematic for Derrida:

> Ah, le tour! [...] J'aime de mille façons l'image du potier, son art, les tours de celui qui sur son tour fait monter la poterie comme une tour en la sculptant, en la moulant mais sans s'assujettir lui-même, ou elle-même, au mouvement rotatoire automatique, en restant aussi libre que possible à l'égard de la rotation, en jouant de tout son corps, et des pieds et des mains avec la machine, cultivant l'art d'un sculpteur (*V*, 32).

Derrida's fascination with the potter's 'tour' reflects a theme that recurs throughout *Voyous*: the impossibility of a return to the past ('re-tour') that is not also a simultaneous turning away from the past ('détournement'). This is clear from the distinction Derrida establishes here between the mechanical, circular repetition of the pottery machine (to which the potter is subjected) and an irreducible elasticity or difference (*jeu*) that undermines this repetition. The act of creation is conceived as occurring both in spite of and with the help of the automatic repetition of the potter's wheel. The wheel follows the movement of a rotation, even a revolution, but never in a circle that closes in on itself. As the revolution of the wheel is repeated, the potter's clay is in a state of continual transformation. Creativity, we can thus surmise, is dependent on the repetition of the past and on a certain malleability or openness faced with the future.

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[16] Naas 2008: 112-21.

ii. *Doing Justice to Freud: Legacy and Aporia*

The same double bind evident in Lévi-Strauss's ambivalence towards psychoanalysis is the subject of Derrida's late essay on Foucault, '"Etre juste avec Freud": L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse' (*R*, 89-146). Although it simulates a certain *rapprochement* with the work of his former teacher, Derrida's lecture takes aim at a concept crucial to Foucault's early work: the *epistémè*. In order to show how the concept of *epistémè*—defined simply as the place in which we think, 'nous pensons en ce lieu'—is inadequate to support Foucault's historical analysis, Derrida focusses on the ambiguous status of Freud in Foucault's *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961). An understanding of Foucault's equivocal representation of Freud in this text is useful because it clarifies Derrida's concept of 'aporia', a term which plays a key role, as we shall see, in Derrida's own relationship to psychoanalysis.

Derrida's reading alights on an underlying uncertainty in the position of psychoanalysis within Foucault's history of madness. On the one hand, Foucault locates Freud within the repressive legacy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the so-called 'âge classique', a period in which madness was equated with unreason ('déraison') and those afflicted by it were detained in newly created institutions throughout Europe. An apparent shift in society's relationship to madness occurred at the end of the eighteenth century, one which coincided with Pinel's mythical liberation of the mad from their penal chains. For Foucault, however, this liberation of the mad was only nominally more enlightened than the previous regime since the newly established mental asylums treated madness as a pathology to be studied and thus merely reproduced the violent incarceration of their predecessors. Foucault places Freud within this overall repressive tradition at several points in his history of madness, arguing that psychoanalysis constitutes only a great confinement pursued by other

means. At other points in his text, however, Foucault locates Freud within a tradition of artists and thinkers—including Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, and Artaud—who speak the language of madness and who allow us to glimpse, however fleetingly, the essence of unreason.

This equivocation on the legacy of psychoanalysis is described by Derrida in terms of an economics of debt: Foucault 'veut tantôt créditer, tantôt discréditer Freud' (*R*, 100). As a consequence of this vacillation, Freud's position within Foucault's text is undecidable. For Derrida, Foucault's Freud thus represents a gate-keeper (*huissier*) between two ages: the classical age of confinement (in which the mad were interned) and our own modern age, which tries to maintain a dialogue with unreason. Foucault's havering with the legacy of psychoanalysis, his reluctance to assign it to one definitive historical *epistémè*, undermines the rigour of his concept of *epistémè*, as one epistemic totality blends indistinctly into another.

Derrida argues that Foucault's problems stem from his insistence on the *univocal* significance of psychoanalysis. Foucault conceives psychoanalysis as a discourse in the singular, at the core of which lies a dogmatic 'analytic situation' whose violence it cannot and will not be able to escape. In this way, Foucault attempts 'd'objectiver la psychanalyse et de la réduire à ce dont il parle plutôt qu'à ce depuis quoi il parle' (*R*, 99). Whereas Foucault's concept of *epistémè* attributes a univocal meaning to *'la* psychanalyse' now and forever, Derrida claims that Freud's legacy is always already plural ('car le passage au pluriel sera l'enjeu même de cette discussion') and thus radically open to transformation in the future (*R*, 97).

In order to apprehend the stakes of Derrida's criticism of Foucault, an understanding of the concept of aporia (*aporie*) is first needed. In "'Etre juste avec Freud'", the notion of aporia is repeatedly associated with what Derrida calls the quasi-transcendental. According to Derrida's argument, the quasi-transcendental involves a theoretical double bind in which the condition of possibility of X is also the condition of its impossibility. In the more concrete

terms of his essay on Foucault, this means that it is impossible for Foucault to fully transcend the conditions that have rendered his discourse on psychoanalysis possible (e.g., his belonging to a postwar French climate in which psychoanalysis, in one form or another, saturated public and private discourse).[17] In this essay, Derrida describes this double bind in terms designed to show how the coherence of Foucault's thinking of the *epistémè* of madness is structurally undermined from the very beginning: 'la condition transcendentale d'une série fait aussi partie, paradoxalement, de la série,' he argues, 'créant des apories pour toute constitution d'un ensemble, notamment d'une configuration historique (âge, *épistémè*, paradigme, *themata*, époque, etc.)' (*R*, 102). In this analysis, Foucault's indebtedness to the age of psychoanalysis, as signaled by the title of Derrida's article, produces aporetic effects which persistently threaten the rigour of his discussion of totalities such as 'psychoanalysis' and 'madness'.

It is crucial to note the distinction Derrida draws between an aporia and a problem. His 1996 text *Apories* highlights the importance of the word's Greek etymology:

> en ce mot il devait y aller du 'ne pas savoir où aller', du non-passage, ou plutôt de l'*expérience* du non-passage, [...] nous paralysant en cette séparation de façon non nécessairement négative [...]. Il devrait y aller de ce qui en somme paraît nous barrer la route ou nous séparer en ce lieu où *il ne serait même plus possible de constituer un problème* (*A*, 31).

In *Apories*, this 'logique' of non-passage, of the *a-poros*, is pursued in relation to two such pathless paths: truth and death. In his reading of Heidegger's account of death, truth, and time in *Being and Time* (1922), Derrida highlights the point at which Heidegger's analyses are confronted with certain logical limits ('frontières') in which the latter's thinking of death reaches a point of argumentative impassibility or undecidability. For Derrida, this is the experience of aporia: an experience of 'le difficile ou l'impracticable' or 'le passage impossible' (*A*, 25). He is careful to distinguish this potentially paralysing experience from a more general experience of the 'problème'. A problem always implies a solution, a passage

[17] See Turkle 1992.

out of non-passage, or an exit from the labyrinth (we might think, for example, of a mathematical problem). On the contrary, an aporia signals that 'la tâche problématique devient impossible'. It confronts us with an unresolvable undecidability which cannot be purged by analytic or dialectical reflection. In drawing attention to 'ce mot fatigué de philosophie et de logique', Derrida aims to rethink the premises of aporia according to the 'logic' of the double bind. Like aporia, the double bind is not a problem to be overcome. Instead, it represents the point at which an analysis (etymologically the attempt to divide an object into simpler units) can no longer proceed.

We can take a concrete example of aporia from Derrida's reading of Foucault's *Histoire de la folie*. In this history, Foucault argues that the Western 'dialogue' with unreason was broken off at two points: first, during the classical age, in which madness (previously ostensible and even sanctified during the early modern period) was deliberately excluded from social spaces (*R*, 107), and second, during the nineteenth century, in which madness was pathologised by positivist psychology. Taking Foucault's text *à la lettre*, we see that Freud sometimes belongs and sometimes does not belong to this positivist legacy personified in the figure of Freud's French rival, Pierre Janet. Foucault writes:

> il faut être juste avec Freud. [...] Il restituait, dans la pensée médicale, la possibilité d'un dialogue avec la déraison. [...] Ce n'est point de psychologie qu'il s'agit dans la psychanalyse: mais précisément d'une expérience de la déraison que la psychologie moderne a eu pour sens de masquer.[18]

Freud is here seen to reinitiate an uneasy dialogue with unreason that had been broken off during the early modern period. Indeed, Foucault later inscribes Freud's name in a line of thinkers (including Nerval, Nietzsche, Artaud, Hölderlin, and Van Gogh) who have opened the possibility of a dialogue with unreason and, by implication, the possibility of a history of madness such as his own.

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[18] Foucault 1961: 411; also cited in *R*, 104-5.

When a similar list is drawn up later in Foucault's study, however, Freud's name is curiously absent. He is missing, Derrida notes, from the 'we' (*nous*) for whom a history of madness has now become possible. Derrida is fascinated by this sudden exclusion of Freud. The meaning of doing justice to Freud ('être juste avec Freud'), he argues, previously associated with a spirit of generosity towards the legacy of psychoanalysis, is now inverted. To do justice to Freud now consists in putting psychoanalysis on trial, in demonstrating its complicity with the reactionary institutions of Family and Law, Father and Judge, Order and Authority. Along with his forefather Pinel, Freud is seen as complicit in a false liberation of the patient from the asylum. For Foucault, psychoanalysis reconstituted the patient as prisoner at the heart of the totalising drama of the 'analytic situation', the hierarchicised relationship of power between doctor and patient which he argues is the principal symptom of psychoanalysis's positivist heritage (*R*, 116). Even more problematic, in Derrida's view, is Foucault's claim that psychoanalysis will *never* free itself from the violence inherent in this analyst-analysand hierarchy. In Foucault's history of madness, '*la psychanalyse est d'avance condamnée*', 'aucun avenir ne lui est promis qui la fasse échapper à son destin' (*R*, 121).

Again, however, this moment of certainty that psychoanalysis '*ne* se libérera *jamais* de l'héritage psychiatrique' (*R*, 118) gives way to ambivalence. In a footnote cited by Derrida, Foucault remarks that the repressive and reactionary structures of Family and Law 'persistent toujours dans la psychiatrie non psychanalytique, *et par bien des côtés encore dans la psychanalyse elle-même*'.[19] For Derrida, the theoretical reluctance legible in this 'bien des côtés' troubles the rigour of Foucault's history because it implies a residual resistance of psychoanalysis to these repressive orders. Foucault's hesitation thus suggests that certain isolated features of Freud's method may one day act as a resource for liberating psychoanalysis from the violence of the analytic situation.

[19] Foucault 1961: 610; *R*, 117.

For Derrida, these inconsistencies must not be thought of as contradictions which could be resolved once sufficient contextual information about Foucault's text is taken into account. Rather, they stem from a double bind at the heart of Foucault's project. In order for a history of madness to be possible, Foucault must reduce the meaning of Freud's legacy to a univocal origin ('*la* psychanalyse' becomes inextricably tied to its origin in a Pinelian psychiatric tradition). In doing so, however, Foucault must pass over (and thus renders his discourse susceptible to) a series of aporias that threaten the self-identity of Freud's textual legacy, for example, Freud's ambivalent treatment of the pathology of madness. Foucault's history can thus only begin by invoking the myth of psychoanalysis as an immutable and univocal legacy and repressing the unconditionally plural character of Freud's work.

This conjuring explains why Foucault's and Lévi-Strauss's attempt to disavow a debt to psychoanalysis, to render it unequivocally absent from their own discourse and entirely present in a determined period in the past, are accompanied by a recourse to myth. Lévi-Strauss propounds the fiction of a creation myth in his attention to a Jivaro culture in which Freud's ideas are already 'present'. Foucault, on the other hand, although he dismisses the Pinelian liberation myth, institutes his own myth of origin in soldering Freud's legacy to the violence of the analytic situation and positivist psychology. For Derrida, such mythologisation is dangerous because it consists in the violent appropriation of the past, present, and future of psychoanalysis. It is with the aim of countering this mythic appropriation of Freud's legacy that Derrida insists on the future of psychoanalysis as unforeseeable and incalculable, that is, as perpetually to come (*à venir*).

iii. *Freud's French Mythopoeia*

As a type of fiction, myth plays an important role in the communication of a legacy from one generation to the next. For Derrida, the purpose of myth is to conceal the otherwise difficult

persistence of aporias in our interpretation of past traces. A myth stresses the simple, the univocal, and the self-identical over and against complexity, ambiguity, and plurality. In his early essay on Freud, for example, Derrida associates myth with the imposition of a fictional origin, one which seeks to conceal its own susceptibility to the spacing of *différance*: 'dire que [la différance] est originaire, c'est du même coup effacer le mythe d'une origine présente' (*ED*, 302). Creation myths, or myths of creativity and originality, will thus play a role of particular importance in Derrida's account of the repression of spacing and the aporetic structure of inheritance.

The history of Freud's reception in France can be understood in terms of a tension between myths surrounding the figure of Freud (what Michel Onfray has recently called 'l'affabulation freudienne') and the irreducibly plural nature of psychoanalysis.[20] Essential to understanding the French mythopoeia surrounding Freud's work is the function of myth as a means of imposing unity on a legacy that is, according to Derrida, always plural. In this way, the jealous rivalries and schisms that have marked the inheritance of Freud's ideas in France can be interpreted as attempting to suppress the aporetic nature of Freud's work by asserting (or attempting to assert) sovereign control over the interpretation of his texts. According to this view, Freud's legacy is disputed through an interpretative archaeology which first establishes his work as original in a specific way (and constructs a myth to convey this originality) and secondly asserts a right of authority over the past, present, and future interpretation of his archives.[21] This dual gesture of the *archē* is made not only by Freud's acknowledged inheritors (Bonaparte, Dolto, Lacan, for example) but also by those (such as Onfray) who would describe themselves as resolutely anti-Freudian.

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[20] Onfray 2010a.

[21] For Derrida's discussion of the significance of the Greek *archē* as both 'commencement' and 'commandement', see *Mal d'archive* (*MA*, 11-13) (see also below, iii.2).

1. Sartre

Sartre's engagement with psychoanalysis is exemplary of the function of myth in the French inheritance of Freud.[22] Although (as Elisabeth Roudinesco has pointed out) Sartre's early engagement with psychoanalysis is notable for its rejection of the myths then surrounding Freud's name in France (e.g., pansexualism, irrationalism, plagiarism of Pierre Janet's work), Sartre was by no means exempt from promoting a Freudian myth of his own.[23] In 1958, the philosopher was asked by the American director John Huston to provide psychoanalysis with a new creation myth: a Hollywood treatment of 'le temps "héroique"' of the discovery of psychoanalysis.[24] According to Roudinesco, Huston's aim was not to create an objective or historical account of the birth of psychoanalysis but rather to produce a filmic treatment of Freud's biography that would carry an implicit criticism of the 'official' interpretation of Freud's work in the United States.[25] American psychiatrists had taken Freud's concept of the ego and placed it at the centre of psychoanalytic therapy, developing an ego-psychology that responded to specifically 'American' concerns such as freedom, responsibility, and self-reliance. Against what he saw as a betrayal of the Freudian legacy, Huston appealed to Sartre to recast Freud's discovery of the method of psychoanalysis as a moment of exemplary existential authenticity. As is clear from the length of the resulting screenplay, however, which would have taken over seven hours to screen, Sartre became increasingly frustrated by the difficulties of creating a filmic myth that could appeal both to French and American tastes. Subsequent disagreements with Huston over the nature and significance of Freud's work and

[22] My predominant focus here is with Sartre's existential appropriation of Freud in his *Scénario Freud*. For a careful study of the influence of Freud and Lacan on Sartre's philosophical development, see Howells 1979. For a more historical treatment, see Roudinesco 2005: 71-121.

[23] Roudinesco 2006: 97.

[24] Pontalis 1984: 9.

[25] Roudinesco 2005: 92.

its representation on screen led Sartre to request that his name be removed from the credits of what was by then a heavily edited film.[26]

In spite of this disappointment, Sartre's *Scénario Freud* remains a fascinating *point de repère* in the history of psychoanalysis in France. Jean-Bertrand Pontalis's preface to Sartre's original script is an invaluable tool in understanding the context of the text's composition because it describes not only Sartre's use of primary sources (principally Freud's pre-psychoanalytic publications and Ernest Jones's then newly published biography) but also his shaping of this primary material to produce a portrait of a young man who was, in Roudinesco's words, 'plus sartrien que jonésien'.[27] Pontalis argues that the publication of *The Origins of Psychoanalysis* in 1954—bringing together for the first time Freud's letters to Wilhelm Fliess, a number of unfinished drafts, and the abandoned 'Project for a Scientific Psychology'—is crucial to understanding Sartre's psychoanalytic myth. Sartre was fascinated by Freud's letters to Fliess, Pontalis claims, because they revealed Freud as a man who had plumbed the depths of his own psychological genesis, who had suffered both crushing theoretical failures and profound therapeutic breakthroughs in the treatment of hysteria.[28] For Sartre, Freud could no longer be seen as the passive receptacle of the truth of the unconscious: he was a man whose psychological demons were intricately involved in the discovery of these truths. Although his screenplay relied on new documents which exposed the extent of Freud's own self-mythologisation (his suppression of the personal elements surrounding his discovery of the unconscious), it is clear that Sartre's goal was never to produce a strictly objective or historical account of Freud's early years. As with his later 'invention' of Flaubert's youth, Sartre's aim was to present the deeper significance of Freud's life. His Freud 'était plus vrai

[26] Roudinesco 2009: 777.

[27] Roudinesco 2009: 777.

[28] As Sartre told Kenneth Tynan some years later, he wanted to 'montrer Freud non pas quand ses théories l'avaient déjà rendu célèbre mais à l'époque où, vers l'âge de trente ans, il se trompait complètement et où ses idées l'avaient conduit dans une impasse désespérée' (cited in Pontalis 1984: 5, n.1).

que nature et moins fictif que celui, à la fois autoritaire et père tranquille, qui émanait de la chronique jonesienne'.[29] In Sartre's mythic treatment of the origins of psychoanalysis, Freud conquers the influence of a series of overbearing scientific fathers (Brücke, Meynert, Breuer) and wrestles with the castrating influence of his patients' fathers. The death of his own father Jakob towards the end of the film finally allows him to claim his own parental authority and existential authenticity as the father of his own science: psychoanalysis.

By returning to the origins of psychoanalysis and locating the significance of Freud's life and work in its existential exemplarity, Sartre's myth can be read as an attempt at reconciling a number of aporias which characterised his own attitude towards psychoanalysis. Although *L'Etre et le néant* (1943), for example, involves an engagement on Sartre's part with such key psychoanalytic notions as the libido, the lapsus, and repression, out of which his own theory of *mauvaise foi* can be seen to emerge as a kind of 'torsion doctrinale',[30] in his 'Questions de méthode' (1957) Sartre rejects psychoanalysis as having no principles and no theoretical basis: 'c'est tout juste si elle s'accompagne—chez Jung et dans certains ouvrages de Freud—d'une mythologie parfaitement inoffensive'.[31]

The same structural ambivalence which characterised Lévi-Strauss's and Foucault's engagement with psychoanalysis is again apparent in Sartre's havering relationship to Freud's work. His mythic revision of Freud as a protagonist of postwar Existentialism can be seen as just one more response to a textual legacy that is divided by aporias and which cannot be reduced to a single, timeless meaning. The myths which reverberate in the French prewar period (pansexualism, irrationalism, degeneracy) evince a desire to ensure that French strands

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[29] Roudinesco 2005: 98-9.

[30] Roudinesco 2005: 80. In her study of Freud's influence on Sartre, Christina Howells highlights Sartre's ambivalent attitude towards psychoanalytic concepts in his biography of Flaubert, concluding that Sartre's study vacillates between the exclusion and assimilation in Freud's work. Sartre's omission of an Oedipal reference in his account of Flaubert's life, for example, can 'be seen as a refusal to rely on Freudian terminology, rather than as a thoroughgoing rejection of the notion itself, since the notion can often be sensed between the lines of Sartre's account' (1979: 174).

[31] Sartre 1985: 56.

of psychiatry and positivist psychology remain uncontaminated by the Viennese doctrine. In the postwar period, by contrast, there is clearly a widening out of Freud's legacy, a renewed openness on the part of philosophers, writers, and artists to engage with Freud's ideas in a more productive way. The dominating figure in this postwar reception of *freudisme* is of course Jacques Lacan, a thinker whose defence of the Freudian cause is just as mythic as the legend he cultivated as Freud's foremost French inheritor.

2. Lacan

The assertion of control over the interpretation of Freud's legacy was the hallmark of Lacan's mythic revision of Freud. 'For half a century,' Roudinesco writes, 'Lacan and his followers divided the psychoanalytic profession into two extreme camps': Lacanians and non-Lacanians.[32] The irony of Lacan's success in popularising psychoanalysis in France was that it did not prevent the later fragmentation of the French psychoanalytic community. The Lacanian school in fact played a precipitating role in the proliferation of these schisms. Although Lacan's interpretation of Freud was initially associated with dynamic resistance to the dogma of the International Psychoanalytic Association, his later control of Freud's French legacy, particularly following the third major institutional schism within French psychoanalysis in 1969, was increasingly accused of a dogmatism and stagnation of its own.[33] One of the ways in which deconstruction proves itself anathema to dogma is in its association of the notion of origin with the notion of myth. In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida shows how the concept of the archive is founded on a dual principle captured by the Greek word *archē*, which means both 'commencement' (beginning, origin) and 'commandement' (order, sovereignty) (*MA*, 11-13). Although Derrida does not explore this thesis in relation to Lacan's interpretation of the Freud archives (as we shall see in Chapter 3, Lacan is referred to only

[32] Roudinesco 2006: 100.

[33] Roudinesco 2006: 100.

indirectly in *Mal d'archive*), it is clear that in Derridean terms Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud represents an attempt both to claim the original meaning (*sens*) of Freud's message and to assert authority over the interpretation of this meaning. In order to achieve this, Lacan created two powerful myths. The first involves his linguistic reinterpretation of Freud's discovery (analogised, as we shall see, in the myth of Diana and Actaeon); the second concerns Lacan's own self-mythologisation as the sole *maître à penser* of psychoanalysis.[34] I will focus here on the first myth, before turning to the second myth in the following section (iii.3).

Lacan's 'return to Freud' involves the imposition of a creation myth on Freud's textual legacy. The aim of this myth is to show how the true nature of psychoanalysis has been diverted and diluted by Freud's inheritors, particularly in Britain and in the United States. Lacan's critique of the American ego-psychologists and his simultaneous exhortation of a return to Freud is best encapsulated in his early lecture, 'La chose freudienne, ou le sens du retour à Freud' (1955).[35] In this lecture, Lacan describes the deviation of Freud's inheritors from his discovery in terms of a well-known fiction: the myth of Diana and Actaeon. This myth analogises the double movement at the heart of Lacan's return to Freud: a return to close reading and commentary on Freud's work *and* a powerful systematisation of Freud's conceptual apparatus.[36] In contrast to Derrida's emphasis on the indissolubility of aporia, Lacan's systematisation of Freud's textual corpus seeks to unknot a number of conceptual contradictions by placing each concept back within its appropriate textual context.[37]

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[34] Accounts of Lacan's self-mythologisation range from the hostile to the sympathetic. For an anecdotal treatment of Lacan's fashioning of his own legend, see Schneiderman 1983; for a sympathetic account, see Clément 1992; the most balanced account of man and myth is given by Roudinesco 1993.

[35] Lacan 1966: 401-36.

[36] John Forrester describes Lacan's method of systematising Freud's work in the following way: 'a sentence cannot be taken out of its context; it relies on that context for its meaning. A paper cannot be read without ascertaining the more general conceptual problem, or practical difficulty, to which it is an answer' (1990: 111).

[37] A gesture which also characterises Laplanche and Pontalis' *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (1971 [1967]).

At the beginning of his lecture, Lacan describes the precise time and place of Freud's discovery of the unconscious. As the eternal site of Freud's discovery, Vienna will remain 'à jamais [...] liée à une révolution de la connaissance à la mesure du nom de Copernic'.[38] This association between Vienna and the spirit of Freud's breakthrough is in itself strategic, suggesting a mythic genesis in which the inscription of a mark in space (Vienna) gives rise to a legacy that will endure for all time ('le lieu éternel'). It is worth noting that Freud himself also had recourse to such a creation myth, detailing, in an early letter, his fantasy of a plaque placed outside his home in Vienna.[39] Lacan refers to this (now real) plaque in his lecture, claiming that it is scandalous that 'la plaque mémoriale qui désigne la maison où Freud élabora son oeuvre héroïque' was not dedicated to him by the International Psychoanalytic Association but was instead paid for by his fellow Viennese citizens.[40] For Lacan this scandal is not a question of etiquette, but rather a question of the *dis*location of the truth of Freud's legacy following its implantation in the New World; he condemns, for example, 'la défaillance symptomatique [qui] trahit un reniement qui ne vient pas de cette terre où Freud de par sa tradition ne fut qu'un hôte de passage, mais du champ même dont il nous a légué le soin et de ceux à qui il en a confié la garde'.[41]

So disfigured has Freud's discovery been by the movement he founded that Lacan's invocation of a return to Freud's original meaning now appears as a kind of reversal ('renversement'). Lacan presents his own return to Freud in an antithetical manner, by taking the way psychoanalysis has developed in the United States as exemplary of the *détournement* of Freud's message. In doing so, he aims to locate 'le moyen de remettre en vigueur ce qui n'a cessé de soutenir [la psychanalyse] dans sa déviation même, à savoir le sens premier que

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[38] Lacan 1966: 401.

[39] 'Do you suppose that some day one will read on a marble tablet on the house: "Here, on July 24, 1895, the secret of the dream revealed itself to Dr. Sigm. Freud". So far there is little prospect of it'. Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, 12 June 1900 (*LWF*, 417).

[40] Lacan 1996: 401.

[41] Lacan 1966: 402.

Freud y préservait par sa seule présence et qu'il s'agit ici d'expliciter'.[42] Lacan's faith in his ability to accede to the original meaning of Freud's texts is exemplified in his reference to his role as a mere vessel of the Freudian message, his reduction of his own function to that of a transparent prosopopoeia: 'quel message à y prêter sa voix!'.[43]

According to Lacan's well-known phrase 'le sens d'un retour à Freud, c'est un retour au sens de Freud'.[44] For Lacan, the essence of Freud's legacy lies in its rehabilitation of a kind of truth that goes beyond what we ordinarily understand by the word 'truth'. Although the term today may seem 'mal famé' or 'proscrit des bonnes compagnies', Lacan argues that the indubitable existence of truth is borne out on a daily basis by psychoanalytic therapy. In order to elucidate the privileged truth of the unconscious, he personifies analytic truth as a Thing (*la chose freudienne*) speaking for and of itself. The fundamentals of the long speech delivered by this 'Thing' on the subject of truth can be grasped in its observation that scientific or philosophical notions of truth are diminished when compared with the potency of unconscious truth: 'le commerce au long cours de la vérité ne passe plus par la pensée: chose étrange, il semble que ce soit désormais par les choses: *rébus*, c'est par vous que je communique'.[45] The Thing concludes that the truth of the unconscious is conveyed through a 'thing', the rebus, an analogy central to Freud's discussion of dream interpretation in Chapter VI of *The Interpretation of Dreams*) (*SE*, *V*, 408).

The self-referential speech of the Freudian Thing culminates in a myth exhorting Freud's inheritors never to abandon their pursuit of psychoanalytic truth. In Lacan's extended analogy, analysts in search of unconscious truth are like Actaeon's hounds hunting for the truth of unconscious desire. The mythic resonances of the Diana and Actaeon story serve Lacan's purpose not only of bringing this idea of truth into sharper focus but also of proposing

[42] Lacan 1966: 402.

[43] Lacan 1966: 403.

[44] Lacan 1966: 405.

[45] Lacan 1966: 410.

a cautionary tale. For Lacan, we must conceive of Freud as an Actaeon in search of his own Diana (the personification of unconscious truth), a young huntsman who is 'perpétuellement lâché par des chiens dès l'abord dépistés, et qu'il s'archarne à relancer à sa poursuite, sans pouvoir ralentir la course où seule sa passion pour la déesse le mène' .[46] In this allegorisation of Freud's life, Lacan transforms the story of Actaeon and Diana into a creation myth in which Freud's discovery is likened to a hunt for the truth of the unconscious and his followers are compared to hounds thrown off its scent from the very beginning. In the Lacanian version, however, the priorities of a traditional chase are inverted, with the hunter here followed ineptly by his own hounds. Meanwhile, the hunter himself (Freud) is spurred on only by his passion for the truth, scarcely having time to turn back and assist his hounds in finding their way. Although the figure of Actaeon-Freud eventually attains the cave of the chthonian goddess, who leads him towards 'la limite quasi mystique du discours le plus rationnel qui ait été au monde' (the discourse of the unconscious), the hounds are abandoned to their own confusion. The cave of the goddess penetrated by Freud is equated by Lacan with the site of the unconscious, 'loin encore d'être [atteint] pour ses disciples, si tant est qu'ils ne refusent pas de l'y suivre'.[47]

Lacan's altering of the traditional account of the Diana-Actaeon myth is crucial in determining the role of the myth as an allegory of the *détournement* of psychoanalysis and the consequent necessity of a 'return to Freud'. Lacan's modification is not limited to his inversion of the position of the hunter and hounds in the hunt. He also alters the traditional account of the story by claiming that it is not Freud who is torn to shreds by his hound-like inheritors. Freud, having already descended out of sight into the shadowy locus of the unconscious, in fact survives the hunt unscathed. If Freud's corpus had been dismembered (according to the dictates of the earlier versions of the myth), this would have entailed that

[46] Lacan 1966: 411.

[47] Lacan 1966: 412.

Freud's legacy endures today only in fragmented form. In order to avoid this outcome and to preserve the univocality (and thus integrity) of Freud's message, Lacan is forced to modify the conventional narrative of the myth and argue that it is the hounds which tear *themselves* to shreds: 'l'Actéon donc qui est dépécé, n'est pas Freud, mais bien chaque analyste à la mesure de la passion qui l'enflamma et qui a fait [...] de lui la proie des chiens de ses pensées'. In order to measure ('pour mesurer') the extent of this tearing apart, that is, in order to calculate the extent to which a particular analyst has deviated from the trail first established by Freud, Lacan exhorts us to listen to 'les clameurs irrépressibles qui s'élèvent des meilleurs comme des pires' and in doing so try to 'les ramener au départ de la chasse'.[48] We must therefore return to the beginning or origin of the hunt in order to gauge the extent to which the psychoanalytic movement has diverged from the path originally trod by Freud, the point at which he first glimpsed the unconscious and was inflamed with a passion for its subconscious dwelling-place. Despite this deviation at the origin of Freud's discovery, Lacan's confidence in the possibility of gaining access to the truth of the unconscious appears, in spite of the clamor of the hounds, unassailable.

3. Derrida

In his denunciation of the hounds that have failed to pursue the scent of unconscious truth and follow the tracks (or *traces*) left by their owner, Lacan positions himself as the first after Freud to gain access to the subterranean domain of the unconscious.[49] Lacan's mythologising of the birth of psychoanalysis can also be read as an attempt at shoring up another myth: his self-mythologisation as Freud's sole, legitimate heir. This desire to appropriate Freud's message leads Lacan not only to claim sole authority over the Freudian textual legacy but also, according to the aporetic logic of jealousy outlined above (i.2), to exclude or to

[48] Lacan 1966: 412.

[49] See Lacan's claim that although some hounds have come closer to the cave than others, none except Freud have passed its 'limite quasi mystique' (1966: 412).

assimilate the work of contemporaries who also engaged at a close theoretical level with Freud's writings.

In an early interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine, Derrida clarifies a number of misapprehensions concerning his personal and professional acquaintance with Lacan. He describes Lacan's ambivalent attitude towards his own work as conforming to a kind of kettle logic ('la logique du chaudron').[50] In Derrida's description, an aporetic gesture of inclusion-exclusion underpins Lacan's references to his work. Derrida refers, for example, to Lacan's 'agressions en forme ou en vue de réappropriation que, depuis la parution de *De la grammatologie* dans *Critique* (1965) (et même plus précocement, me dit-on) Lacan a multipliées, directement ou indirectement, en privé ou en public' (*P*, 113, n.33). According to Derrida, Lacan deployed, on the one hand, a strategy of 'valorisation et réappropriation' in his public references to Derrida's work, insisting that Derrida's ideas had in fact already been formulated by him. On the other hand, Lacan deployed a strategy of 'dévalorisation et déjection', maintaining in his seminars and other writings that Derrida's ideas were worthless and that he was in complete disagreement with them. Such kettle logic, Derrida points out, is aporetic because it proceeds by accumulating 'pour les besoins d'une cause, les assertions incompatibles' (*P*, 113, n.33). This paradoxical logic of simultaneous absence and presence also characterises Lacan's relationship to Ricoeur and, as we have seen, Foucault's and Lévi-Strauss's equivocal relationship to the legacy of psychoanalysis.[51]

What is noteworthy in Derrida's description of Lacan's ambivalence towards his own work is Derrida's recourse to a psychoanalytic concept (kettle logic) in his interpretation of

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[50] The phrase stems from a logical fallacy explored by Freud in a number of texts (*SE*, *IV*, 119-20; *SE*, *VIII*, 62, 206). This fallacy involves the anecdote of a man accused by his neighbour of having returned his kettle in a damaged condition. The man defends himself with a threefold argument: that he had returned the kettle undamaged; that it was damaged when he borrowed it; and that he never borrowed it in the first place. Freud's point is that, while this is deemed inconsistent in waking life, during a state of dreaming the unconscious has little difficulty admitting contradictory ideas such as these. Derrida's exploration of the aporetic 'logic' of the unconscious is explored in Chapter 1 (1.iii).

[51] On Ricoeur and Lacan, see Roudinesco 2009: 1091-101.

this ambivalence. Derrida points out that Lacan's attempt at appropriation and rejection of deconstruction can be analysed using 'un schéma argumentatif précisément analysé par Freud'. Indeed, as Derrida reminds Houdebine, he has had explicit recourse to this schema in his own analysis of the equivocal status of writing in the Western tradition (*P*, 113, n.33). Derrida's assertion here of the value of Freud's legacy as a theoretical resource foreshadows his later work on the continuing influence of psychoanalysis in *Mal d'archive*. In this text, Derrida refers to what he calls 'l'impression freudienne', a notion which, as we shall see in Chapter 3, he uses to describe the indelible but nebulous influence that psychoanalysis continues to exert on thinking today. Derrida's notion of the *impression* can be read as a response both to the theoretical paralysis of Foucault's concept of *épistémè* and to the French mythologisation of Freud's legacy we have explored thus far in this Introduction. The specificity of Derrida's return to Freud, I argue, lies precisely in its *de*-mythologisation of this legacy. Critical to this aim is Derrida's notion of spacing, a concept which involves both the impossibility of a return to the point of origin of Freud's discovery (as described in Lacan's myth) *and* the necessity of a continual transformation of the concepts Freud has bequeathed to us. In *Mal d'archive*, with the aim of interrogating the mythologisation of Freud's legacy, that is, the way in which control ('commandement') has persistently been exerted over Freud's archives ('commencement'), Derrida appeals to yet another mythic fiction: Wilhelm Jensen's short story, *Gradiva* (1902). In his rereading of Jensen's story and of Freud's now canonical interpretation of it, however, Derrida shows how the process of spacing forecloses the possibility of a return to the origin of Freud's breakthrough and explores the implications of spacing for the continuing vitality of Freud's legacy.

While at the outset of his programmatic 'La chose freudienne' Lacan had invoked the topological authority of Vienna as the eternal site of Freud's discovery, Derrida begins *Mal d'archive* with an interrogation of what he calls the archontic principle governing the

interpretation of archives, a principle which invests the physical location of documents (their '*topologie* privilégiée') with authority over their subsequent interpretation (*MA*, 13). The context of the lecture which became the text of *Mal d'archive* is of particular importance in this regard. The lecture was originally given at Freud's London home, which today acts as a museum and site of deposition of numerous important documents relating to the history of psychoanalysis. It is no accident, then, that in his lecture Derrida describes what he calls our *mal d'archive* as 'un désir irrépressible de retour à l'origine, un mal de pays, une nostalgie' (*MA*, 142) and as an authority exerted 'sur le document, sur sa détention, sa rétention ou son intérpretation' (*MA*, 'Prière d'insérer'). Although his criticisms of the ease with which we exert authority over the interpretation of archives are directed towards Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's study of Freud's work, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1993), Derrida's demonstration of the impossibility of a return to the origin can also be directed against those who claim to be '[le] premier après Freud' (*MA*, 90). Derrida's goal in this text is to disperse the principle of filial authority over the interpretation of archived documents, in this case over the Freud archives. In order to do so, he makes use of the concept of spacing to demonstrate, on the one hand, the impossibility of fully resuscitating the past through its traces and, on the other, that this impossibility (which he calls *le trouble de l'archive*) paradoxically gives rise to our feverish desire to archive and to return to the past (*le mal d'archive*).

In describing the fundaments of his notion of spacing, Derrida makes use of a fiction, one which provides a mythic representation of the desire for a univocal and timeless origin: Jensen's *Gradiva*. In the final section of *Mal d'archive* ('Thèses'), Derrida proposes a rereading of Jensen's tale, famously analysed by Freud in 1907 (*SE*, *IX*, 1-95). Jensen's story involves a sequence of hallucinations in which a German archaeologist, Norbert Hanold, believes he sees the ghost of a Pompeiian woman (Gradiva) killed in the eruption which

buried the city. Hanold, travelling to the ruins of Pompeii, eventually encounters the woman in the flesh and is surprised to discover, after he begins speaking to her in German, that she is in reality his beloved childhood friend Zoë. In Freud's interpretation of this story, 'toute la machinerie étiologique de la psychanalyse' is mobilised to produce a thorough and convincing account of the archaeologist's phantasms, which Freud explains as stemming from Hanold's externalisation (or 'projection') of his repressed desires for Zoë (*MA*, 136).

Derrida's rereading of Jensen's fiction, which matches Freud's in its theoretical dexterity, goes one step further. In his interpretation of Hanold's *mal d'archive*, his desire to reawaken the Pompeian past of Gradiva by travelling to the city itself, Derrida retains a number of elements of Freud's reading: the repression of desire, compulsivity, repetition, and the notion of the phantasm. He adds, however, one element that Freud had omitted in his reading. Freud had insisted that after seeing a bas-relief of Gradiva in Rome Hanold goes to Pompeii to find the woman herself. Derrida points out that this does not correspond precisely to Jensen's wording in the text. On the contrary, 'Hanold est venu chercher ces traces au sens littéral (*im wörtlichen Sinne*)'. Hanold does not, as Freud claims, dream of actually meeting Gradiva but rather of *reliving* the singular impression left by Gradiva's foot on the Pompeian soil (*MA*, 151). For Derrida, his search for her traces is symptomatic of his desire to reawaken the past at the precise moment when Gradiva's footprint was not yet detached from its source, at the moment when spacing had not yet intervened to trouble the reawakening of her footsteps. Rather than searching for a woman who lives on, Hanold goes in search of her surviving traces, of 'l'unicité de l'impression et de l'empreinte, de la pression et de sa trace, *à l'instant* unique où elles ne se distinguent pas encore l'une de l'autre, faisant *à l'instant* un seul corps du pas de Gradiva' (*MA*, 152). As we saw in our earlier account of spacing, however, the satisfaction of this *mal d'archive* is always frustrated by the perpetual deferral of presence. The singular traces of Gradiva's footsteps provide Derrida with a powerful analogy

for the complexities of temporality, signification, and memory that confront our interpretation of the original intentions of Freud's texts. In Derrida's reading, the spacing that separates Hanold from an experience of Pompeii before its fall is irreducible. Yet, as an archaeologist, Hanold must continue to work against this spacing, under the myth that the stones speak, that 'l'origine alors parle d'elle-même' (*MA*, 144).

One element in particular of Derrida's account of spacing in *Mal d'archive* is crucial to understanding his relationship to Freud: his use of psychoanalytic concepts in interrogating the possibility of a faithful reawakening of Freud's message. In this regard, Derrida's concept of a *mal d'archive* is exemplary since in its very structure it recalls the composition of the psychoanalytic drive. Such a drive would take as its aim the satisfaction of an innate desire for the origin. Due to the unconditional process of spacing, however, this desire of a metaphysics founded on presence remains unsatisfiable. Pivotally, in his description of this archival drive, Derrida draws on motifs borrowed from Freud's notion of the compulsion to repeat, calling it 'un désir compulsif, répétitif et nostalgique, un désir irrépressible de retour à l'origine' (*MA*, 142). This structural implication in what he calls 'l'impression freudienne' is perhaps the most important theoretical element in Derrida's overall engagement with psychoanalysis and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

A close reading of Derrida's late interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco clarifies the role of spacing in his engagement with Freud's work. The final dialogue of the collection, 'Eloge de la psychanalyse' (*DQD*, 269-316), involves a lengthy reflection on Derrida's part on the importance of psychoanalysis in the overall development of his work. He describes his relationship to psychoanalysis in terms of the ambivalent requirements of a friendship. Although he concedes that he is a friend of psychoanalysis, he notes that friendship necessarily involves a degree of distance. While friendship implies 'une approbation

irréversible, le "oui" accordé à l'existence ou à l'événement', it also involves 'la réserve ou le retrait nécessaires à la critique, à la discussion, au questionnement réciproque' (*DQD*, 271).

Derrida acknowledges here that psychoanalysis 'reste un événement historique ineffaçable' (*DQD*, 271). This statement is important in understanding Derrida's view of the relationship between deconstruction and psychoanalysis. It is because the Freudian impression is ineffaceable that Derrida's debt to Freud will always remain incalculable. To deny such a debt, to try to rigidly calculate and circumscribe its scope, would be to disavow the unconditionality of our inheritance of psychoanalysis. To calculate with debt is to risk introducing the same aporias that paralysed Foucault's and Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of Freud. Indeed, it is Foucault whom Derrida seems to have in mind here in articulating this situation of structural indebtedness to the past, alluding to the former's definition of the *épistémè* in his observation that the Freudian revolution 'a déjà marqué et devrait continuer de marquer, toujours autrement, l'espace dans lequel nous habitons, pensons, travaillons, écrivons, enseignons, etc.'. Unlike Foucault, however, Derrida is unwilling to ascribe a definitive historical beginning (*archē*) or end (*telos*) to the legacy of psychoanalysis. This difference is decisive because in attempting to retain the structural openness of Freud's texts, Derrida avoids mythologising the psychoanalytic inheritance by refusing to reduce it to a univocal and universal meaning that can be reawakened at all times and in all places. Unlike Foucault, Derrida refrains from attributing to psychoanalysis a future that would be circumscribed or foreseeable: 'la psychanalyse a eu lieu sans avoir encore eu lieu' (*DQD*, 272).

Derrida defines the friend of psychoanalysis as 'celui qui tient à sa vigilance et qui l'exerce à une certaine distance' (*DQD*, 273). This spatial distance also suggests an irreducible temporal distance from the historical moment of Freud's discovery. The notion of psychoanalysis as a discourse that is outdated is frequently invoked throughout Derrida and

Roudinesco's dialogue, notably in relation to Freud's metapsychology. Although Derrida concedes that Freud's metapsychological reflections were necessary in breaking with psychological positivism, he is doubtful that the fundamental theoretical elements of Freud's account of the mind can survive in their current form for much longer. 'La grande machine freudienne', he claims (involving concepts such as the id, ego, superego, the distinction between the primary and secondary processes, etc.) are only 'armes provisoires' in a struggle that is itself in a state of constant transformation. At the same time, however, these concepts retain a strategic theoretical value, constituting 'des outils rhétoriques bricolés contre une philosophie de la conscience, de l'intentionalité transparente et pleinement responsable' (*DQD*, 280).

Against these outdated and outmoded models, Derrida argues that we must turn to Freud's more obscure analyses, to his speculative stabs in the dark, in order to draw out 'leur puissance révolutionnaire' (*DQD*, 280). Although we are obliged to take account of the historical situation of Freud's breakthrough, we must also concede that the context ('le champ') in which Freud's work flourished is no longer the same as our own. The difficulty of simply abandoning certain psychoanalytic insights, however, remains 'troublante' and 'angoissante' because it risks—the notion of the future is always, in Derrida's work, equated with a certain incalculable risk—joining with those who want to destroy psychoanalysis. Such a risk remains irreducible, however, in any attempt to ensure the continued vitality of Freud's breakthrough. Pivotally, Derrida argues that the survival of a legacy always involves both the reaffirmation of past traces and the openness of these traces towards future contexts: 'on ne déconstruit pas simplement en progressant, sans risques. Il faut toujours réaffirmer quelque chose du passé pour éviter une rechute encore pire' (*DQD*, 285). Derrida's work, I hope to show, involves a clear reaffirmation of the traces of Freud's legacy in its repeated return to psychoanalysis as a theoretical resource in its own articulation of a project of deconstruction.

Derrida here concedes that his work can be understood as part of this survival of Freud's legacy. As he points out, his use of psychoanalytic concepts is just as prevalent in those texts which treat Freud's writings as in those which do not (ostensibly at least) address psychoanalytic themes. Indeed, for Derrida, we must be willing to move beyond the clinical frontiers of psychoanalysis and carry the subversive legacy of Freud's work beyond the situation in which it was originally inscribed (*DQD*, 286). In this sense, Derrida's own work represents just one of the ways in which Freud's insights have been carried beyond their initial context.

iv. Critical Context and Summary

Deconstruction, then, constitutes one way in which the legacy of psychoanalysis continues to be adapted and transformed today. In many of his texts, however, Derrida is critical of psychoanalysis's indebtedness to metaphysics, of certain prejudices it evinces regarding the value of 'presence'. Derrida's self-designation as a friend of psychoanalysis is designed, we saw, to justify his equivocal relationship to Freud: a friend supports and affirms, while retaining the distance necessary to question and to criticise. Derrida's notion of spacing plays a key role in understanding why 'psychoanalysis is at once enabling and an object of criticism for Derrida', an ambivalence that has been a central difficulty in scholarly accounts of the role of psychoanalysis in his work.[52]

By stressing the importance of spacing in Derrida's thinking of inheritance, my reading aims to avoid the jealous logic of presence and absence which characterised Lévi-Strauss's treatment of the relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology. According to this jealous logic, the discourse of deconstruction would be either wholly interior to psychoanalysis (that is, it would represent at bottom only a form of psychoanalytic

[52] Melville 1986: 87.

interpretation applied to the history of philosophy) or wholly exterior to it (deconstruction would owe nothing to psychoanalysis and would be unmarked in any way by the Freudian impression). Against both alternatives, the difficulty of thinking Derrida's notion of inheritance stems from its analysis of legacy not on the basis of absolute values of 'presence' or 'absence', on the calculability of debts paid or unpaid, but instead on the basis of the spectrality of the trace.

While it is tempting to view Derrida's ambivalence towards psychoanalysis in psychobiographical terms, the reading of spacing I propose in this thesis allows us to interpret ambivalence as a structural feature of every legacy. Several critics have discerned a quasi-unconscious element in Derrida's apparently hasty rejection of the analogies between deconstruction and psychoanalysis (as in the opening paragraphs of 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture') and in his later accentuation of these analogies (in *Mal d'archive*, for example).[53] In her concise but wide-ranging reading of the role of psychoanalysis in Derrida's writings, Maud Ellmann divides Derrida's career into several discrete units, with each period situated in relation to an overall trajectory. According to Ellmann, Derrida's attitude towards psychoanalysis gradually shifts from one of open hostility to one of permissive benevolence. Derrida's 'one-upmanship gradually gives way to admiration for the deconstructive potency of the Freudian *oeuvre*, its uncanny foreshadowings of Derrida's own methods'; similarly, an 'early scepticism yields to his delight in the inexhaustible complexities of Freudian thought'.[54] The difficulty with this reading is that it divides Derrida's engagement with Freud into self-identical historical totalities in which Derrida '*alternately* rejects and reincorporates

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[53] Geoffrey Bennington highlights the 'brittle and tense' tone of Derrida's dismissal of these analogies (2000: 97). Trumbull (2012: 76) has also emphasised a 'resistance' on Derrida's part towards psychoanalysis, legible, for instance, in Derrida's subtle misconstrual of Freud's notion of the death drive in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'.

[54] Ellmann 2000: 214; 234. The difficulty of supporting this reading is underscored by Christina Howells's identification of an opposing trajectory in Derrida's work: 'as his interest [in psychoanalysis] increases it becomes less academic, more political, more ethical and, at times, more overtly critical, at least of the institutions of psychoanalysis' (Howells 1998: 96).

the psychoanalytic enterprise within his own'.[55] As we saw in Derrida's critique of Foucault's reading of Freud, any attempt to impose a series of absolutely discrete historical unities on a textual legacy risks miring a text in aporias which undermine the historicisation in question.[56] It does an injustice to deconstruction's complex theoretical approach to the problem of inheritance to claim that 'Derrida plays *fort-da* with psychoanalysis, at times rejecting it (in its Lacanian form), at times outsmarting it ("Freud and the Scene of Writing"), at times adopting it ("To Speculate—on 'Freud'"), at times crusading for it (Abraham and Torok)'.[57] In what follows, I will try to demonstrate this complexity in Derrida's inheritance of psychoanalysis, one which I argue stems not from considerations that are too narrowly personal or psychological but rather from the aporetic nature of every legacy.

In a similar vein, we must also avoid an approach to Derrida's reading of Freud that stresses the total 'presence' or 'absence' of certain psychoanalytic concepts in his work and in doing so ignores Derrida's account of the spectral structure of the trace. Nowhere is this difficulty more pronounced than in the problem of the analogical resonances between Derrida's project and that of Freud, a problem Alan Bass identifies as the key problem in the relationship between deconstruction and psychoanalysis.[58] Several commentators have highlighted similarities between Derrida's method of reading and Freud's theory of dream interpretation, pointing out, for example, that 'Derrida characteristically concentrates on elements which others find marginal, seeking not to elucidate what a text says but to reveal an uncanny logic that operates in and across texts, whatever they say'.[59]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of the analogies between psychoanalysis and deconstruction is worth dwelling on in particular, however, because her treatment of Derrida's

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[55] Ellmann 2000: 216 (my italics).

[56] In this sense, I am in agreement with Geoffrey Bennington who warns against the attempt to divide Derrida's work into particular 'styles or periods' (1993: 13)

[57] Ellmann 2000: 233.

[58] Bass 1984: 76.

[59] Culler 2002: 14-15. This affinity has also been noted by Norris 1988: 184.

debt to Freud consists in a process of calculation, one which I argue is inconsistent with Derrida's analysis of the incalculable structure of spacing. Although now over three decades old, Spivak's 'Translator's Preface' (1976) to the English translation of Derrida's *De la grammatologie* remains a key text in positioning Derrida's work within the larger philosophical tradition of his 'acknowledged precursors': Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Freud.[60] Indeed, the goal of this thesis will be to explore, with reference to the example of psychoanalysis, Spivak's claim that 'the predicament of having to use resources of the heritage that one questions is the *overt* concern of Derrida's work'.[61] Spivak's stated aim is to quantify a series of analogies between Derrida's and Freud's hermeneutic approaches. This aim runs counter, however, to Derrida's own argument for the intrinsic incalculability of debt, advanced, for example, in his discussion of the influence of Plato on Freud (and vice versa) in *La Carte postale* (*CP*, 393-412).[62]

Spivak's analysis of the analogical resonances between deconstruction and psychoanalysis centres on a comparison between Freud's theory of the 'dream-work' (the way in which the unconscious 'scrambles' its desires to allow them to be represented in displaced form in the manifest dream) and Derrida's argument for the repression of writing in the history of Western philosophy. For Spivak, Derrida's 'often implicit Freudianism' surfaces in his treatment of the history of metaphysics as a kind of 'dream-neurosis-psychosis'.[63] In this view, 'Derrida pushes through to an extreme Freud's own method of attending to the "syntax" of a dream text', in particular in his attention to those parts of a text that are either 'supersmooth or superclumsy'.[64] As evidence of this line of theoretical descent, Spivak's argument proceeds by quantification, identifying each of the four techniques of interpretation

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[60] Spivak 1997: xxi.

[61] Spivak 1997: 318, n.13.

[62] On Spivak's later account of the problem of influence in her reading of *La Carte postale*, see Mukherjee 2011. The problem of the incalculability of debt is treated at greater length in Chapter 3 (i) of this thesis.

[63] Spivak 1997: 318, n.18.

[64] Spivak 1997: xlvi.

of the dream-work outlined by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (condensation, displacement, the means of representation and considerations of representability: *SE*, *IV-V*, 277-349) and mapping them onto Derrida's general practice of reading. While she acknowledges that certain elements of this analogy will remain irreducible in the 'close yet necessarily oblique relationship between Freud's and Derrida's methods of textual interpretation', Spivak nonetheless insists on the ultimate calculability of Derrida's debt to psychoanalysis, arguing that the precise stakes of this relationship could be uncovered through a more thoroughgoing analysis than her own.[65] Indeed, such an analysis would be able to account for the apparent contradiction between Derrida's use of a Freudian interpretive framework *and* the assertiveness of his critique of Freud. Unable to resolve this contradiction theoretically, Spivak (like many other commentators) falls back on a quasi-psychoanalytic interpretation, arguing that Derrida 'is clearly not willing to assume the responsibility for what might seem a psychoanalytic schema'.[66] She concludes her analysis by reaffirming the possibility of a return to the Freudian origin of Derrida's interpretative schema and claims that the ambivalence should in principle be resolvable through a more detailed analysis of Derrida's use of Freud's concepts, which she categorises as 'an undertaking for a future deconstructor'. This desire to quantify and thus circumscribe Derrida's debt to psychoanalysis signals an urge that is akin to that of the protagonist of Jensen's *Gradiva*: a nostalgic desire to return to the 'origin' of the theoretical insights of deconstruction and Derrida's practice of reading. As we have seen, such a *mal d'archive* is explicitly questioned by Derrida later in his career.

In a related vein, the complexity of Derrida's thinking of inheritance and spacing cautions us against interpreting psychoanalysis solely as an incipient form of deconstruction, with Freud as a kind of proto-Derridean. For Derrida, I suggested earlier, the 'past' is never in

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[65] Spivak 1997: xlvii.

[66] Spivak: 1997: lxxxii.

a state of unequivocal self-identity; it is continually modified by the relationship between the trace and the context of its current interpretation. The movement of spacing entails that the past can only be grasped *après coup*, from the vantage point of a present that is itself in a state of constant instability. This situation means that we are always in danger of retrojecting the concerns of our contemporary context onto the traces of the past. Although this retrojective structure of temporality is for Derrida irreducible, he argues that responsible reading consists in an awareness of the way in which the present continually preforms our perception of the past. The claim that 'for Derrida, Freud becomes a Derridean *avant la lettre*' is thus a dangerous one and one which must always be accompanied by an emphasis on the provisionality of the significance of psychoanalysis for Derrida.[67] As we have seen throughout this Introduction, the specificity of Derrida's engagement with Freud lies in its unwillingness to reduce Freud's breakthrough to a timeless, univocal significance (in this case, psychoanalysis as proto-deconstruction) and in its insistence on the flexibility of Freud's legacy in the face of its unforeseeable future.

The danger involved in this view is that it reduces the essence of psychoanalysis's breakthrough to a nascent form of deconstruction and results in descriptions of Freud's work in which it is impossible to determine where psychoanalysis ends and deconstruction begins. In Jonathan Culler's description of 'Freudian deconstruction', for instance, it becomes difficult to separate the Freudian from the Derridean:

> Freud begins with a series of hierarchical oppositions: normal/pathological, sanity/insanity, real/imaginary, experience/dream, conscious/unconscious, life/death. [...] Freud's investigations deconstruct these oppositions by identifying what is at stake in our desire to repress the second term and showing that in fact each first term can be seen as a special case of the fundamentals designated by the second term, which in this process is transformed [...]. These deconstructive reversals, which give

[67] Wright 1998: 121.

> pride of place to what had been thought marginal, are responsible for much of the revolutionary impact of Freudian theory.[68]

It is important to avoid overstating the deconstructive credentials of psychoanalysis. Such overstatement risks re-mythologising Freud precisely at the point when Derrida's work calls into question the various myths that have accompanied the reception of Freud's work. Retrojecting Derridean notions onto Freud's corpus risks effacing the specificity of both discourses, something which Derrida explicitly warns against. An example of Derrida's insistence on the necessity of responsibility in our interpretation of past traces is found in *La Carte postale*, during a passage in which Derrida discusses a recently published French translation of Marx and Engels's *German Ideology*. The translation, Derrida argues, renders an injustice both to the specificity of Marx and Engels's text and to the specificity of deconstruction in rendering the German '*aufgelöst werden können*' by the French 'peuvent être déconstruite' (*CP*, 285). Without the slightest explanation, he points out, the French translation of the German was modified from previous versions which had translated the term 'aufgelöst' ('fidèlement', as he notes) by 'résolu' and 'dissous'. The irresponsibility involved in this translation is far from inconsequential because 'l'amalgame une fois accompli, l'appropriation incorporée, on laisse entendre que la "déconstruction" est destinée à rester limitée à la "critique intellectuelle" des superstructures. Et on fait comme si Marx l'avait déjà dit' (*CP*, 286).

As we saw at the beginning of this Introduction, Derrida encapsulates the structure of the trace in the image of a potter working at the wheel, one who sculpts and moulds his given material 'sans s'assujettir lui-même, ou elle-même, au mouvement rotatoire automatique, en restant aussi libre que possible à l'égard de la rotation' (*V*, 32). In a similar way, the theoretical material we have inherited from Freud must continually be reshaped according to

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[68] Culler 2007: 160-1. Culler is careful to point out at the beginning of his analysis that this is just 'one way to understand Freud's achievement'.

the context of an ever-shifting present moment. In the five chapters which follow, I explore a number of ways in which Derrida reaffirms the theoretical resource of Freud's work while at the same moulding the psychoanalytic legacy to suit his own deconstructive project. Given the extensive corpus of texts in which Derrida treats psychoanalytic themes, to say nothing of work as yet unpublished or those published texts in which psychoanalysis plays a less ostentatious role, this thesis pursues a modest number of themes in Derrida's engagement with psychoanalysis. I have tried to emphasise the diversity of Derrida's return to Freud rather than aiming at a totalisation that could only ever be specious. With this end in mind, I have avoided covering terrain that has already been considered at length by other commentators. I say little, for example, of Derrida's crucial reworking of the Freudian notion of the uncanny.[69] Similarly, for all the ghostly conjuring of Derrida's later work, in particular *Mal d'archive* and *Spectres de Marx* (1993), I have avoided engaging at length with the influence of psychoanalysis's theory of haunting on Derrida's thinking of spectrality ('hauntologie').[70] The critical role played by psychoanalysis in the development of Derrida's thinking of the fetish (in *Glas*)[71] and in his thinking of mourning have also been treated extensively by a number of critics.[72] While I have endeavoured to include at least some reference to all of Derrida's major texts on psychoanalysis, it is inevitable that some elements have been accentuated at the expense of others. I say little regarding Derrida's involvement in the institutional aspects of psychoanalysis, in France and internationally, partly because of obvious limitations of scope and partly because I am interested in psychoanalysis as a resource for deconstruction and not deconstruction as a resource for psychoanalysis.[73]

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[69] The subject of a detailed study by Royle 2003. Sarah Kofman characterises deconstruction as the work of 'un philosophe unheimlich' (1984: 11-114).

[70] On this subject, see Davis 2007: 73-92 and 128-50.

[71] Kofman 1984: 132-9; Hobson 1998: 111-19.

[72] Kamuf 2012; Bennington 2011; Miller 2009: 306-26; Naas 2008: 167-86.

[73] For a lucid and concise account of Derrida's involvement with psychoanalysis as an institution, see Kamuf 2010: 178-86. A more historical account is given by Roudinesco 2009: 1399-405 and 2046-8.

My aim in this study, then, is to provide an outline of the richness and diversity of psychoanalysis as a conceptual resource across the breadth of Derrida's philosophical career. Following the theoretical and contextual discussion of this Introduction, each of the five main chapters focusses on a specific problem encountered in Derrida's work and the role played by psychoanalysis in the resolution of this problem. In Chapter 1, I foreground the importance of Derrida's reading of Freud in his early grappling with phenomenology and show how a Husserl-Freud coupling in this period provides a useful framework for charting the emergence of a number of key deconstructive themes. Chapter 2 turns to Derrida's reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' (1980), arguing that the latter text is a key point of reference in exploring the relationship between Derrida's work and problems in the philosophy of science. Chapter 3 provides this thesis with its theoretical backbone, reading *Mal d'archive* as a text in which Derrida negotiates and justifies his ambivalent engagement with Freud through the financial figures of debt and inheritance. In Chapter 4, I turn to points of convergence between Freud's thinking of psychical mastery and Derrida's discussion of the possibility and impossibility of mastering *différance*. With this thinking of mastery in mind, Chapter 5 considers Derrida's later, more political writings, specifically his response to the events of September 11 and shows how Derrida's thinking of terror, trauma, and technoscience is both indebted to psychoanalytic insights at the same time that it reformulates these insights in a new, politicised context. In a short conclusion, I recapitulate my reading of spacing in the context of the preceding analyses and indicate some ways in which Derrida's deconstruction of the psychoanalytic inheritance might help to clarify and orient our own inheritance of deconstruction.

1

‘Freud et la scène de l’écriture’
Derrida and Freud beyond Phenomenology

‘Freud et la scène de l’écriture’ can be described as the theoretical hub of Derrida’s *L’Ecriture et la différence* (1967). Although the essays on Foucault and Lévi-Strauss have gained wider currency, it is in Derrida’s reading of Freud that we are given the collection’s fullest account of what he calls ‘écriture’, not only in its uncertain relationship to Freud’s theory of psychical ‘writing’ but also as it concerns larger philosophical problems such as the origin of time and space, the connection between subjectivity and memory, and the relationship between the human and the technological. Many of the themes explored by Derrida later in his work—several of which this thesis will explore in subsequent chapters—are already touched on here, if only in nascent form. The essay thus provides an excellent point of departure for any account of the significance of psychoanalysis within the overall development of Derrida’s work.

The text of ‘Freud et la scène de l’écriture’ is a fragment of a much longer seminar paper given at the Institut de Psychanalyse in Paris in March 1966. The first part of this paper is summarised by Derrida at the beginning of the essay and is described as questioning whether certain ideas advanced in *De la grammatologie* could be accommodated within ‘le champ d’une interrogation psychanalytique’ (*ED*, 293).[74] According to Derrida, the notion of the ‘archi-trace’ played a key role in this discussion. Indeed, in the text proper of the essay, Derrida continually returns to the motif of the trace in Freud’s writings, both in its psychical and graphic senses (or neither in the case of the archi-trace). More specifically, it is through an engagement with the Freudian notion of the memory trace (*Erinnerungsspur*) that Derrida

[74] That is, ideas broached in ‘De la grammatologie (I)’, *Critique*, 223, 1965: 1017-41, and ‘De la grammatologie (II)’, *Critique*, 224, 1966: 23-53, both of which were later incorporated into the text of *De la grammatologie*.

(i) elucidates his own thinking of a trace that is more general than either the Freudian or the graphic trace (what he variously calls the 'archi-trace', 'écriture', or 'espacement') and (ii) determines the extent of Freud's implication in a tradition that has always suppressed reflection on this primordial 'écriture sans encre' (*ED*, 338).

Given this narrow focus, it may seem surprising that 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' has been interpreted in diverse ways by commentators. Although the essay contains little direct reference to literary criticism, its discussion of the psyche as text has provided several critics and theorists with a useful theoretical framework for literary studies.[75] Motifs of violence and inscription in the text have lead Christopher Johnson to argue that Derrida's reading of Freud in this essay 'would be impossible without the modern development of cybernetic and information theory'.[76] And from a more historical perspective, a recent reading by Edward Baring draws on archival material to position the essay as a 'crucial intervention' in a debate then current within the French psychoanalytic community, concerning the respective merits of Freud's topographical and energetic models of the mind.[77]

The diversity of these responses gives some indication of the richness of Derrida's reflections in 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture'. I will argue here, however, that one decisive reference has been missing from almost all critical accounts of the essay: the crucial role of phenomenology in Derrida's early reading of Freud. The lack of attention paid to Derrida's Husserlian vocabulary in this text is all the more striking given that, at least until 1962 (the year in which his translation and lengthy introduction to Husserl's 'The Origin of Geometry' was published), Derrida's philosophical concerns had been almost exclusively phenomenological. It is only with the publication of *La Voix et la phénomène* in 1967 that Derrida recognised the limitations of phenomenology as irreducible and in doing so ceased to

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[75] Bloom 1975: 48-9; Wright 1998: 123; Jacobus 1999: 26-7; Norris 2002: 121-3.

[76] Johnson 1993: 76. Johnson's later work (2008) has pursued this connection between deconstruction, technology, and science. See also his short contribution (2011) to Gaston and Maclachlan 2011: 11-14.

[77] Baring 2011: 211.

entertain the possibility of a transformation of phenomenology from within.[78] As we shall see, both 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' and *La Voix et le phénomène* contain traces of their almost contemporaneous composition, traces which are indicative of a much wider imbrication of the phenomenological and psychoanalytic approaches in Derrida's early work. It is important to establish the significance of this Freud-Husserl coupling early in this thesis, as the confrontation staged by Derrida's work between both discourses is apparent at almost every stage of his philosophical career.

While it is unquestionable that psychoanalysis remains hugely determined by its belonging to the metaphysics of presence, Freud's work nonetheless provides Derrida with a strategic resource for the deconstruction of this tradition. As Derrida frequently points out, although Freud's work is contemporaneous with Husserl's phenomenology, psychoanalysis represents a distinct breakthrough—'percée', 'trouée' (*ED*, 296; 337)—in the history of the metaphysical attachment to the value of presence. In this chapter, I will examine some of the ways in which Derrida's early reading of Freud involves a contrapuntal account of the relationship between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. As we shall see, while Husserl's work evinces an unshakeable confidence in the so-called 'living present', Freud's theory of the unconscious involves a sustained mediation on the problem of non-present and thus non-conscious psychical content. It is in psychoanalysis's problematic relationship to the value of presence that Derrida locates much of the originality of Freud's breakthrough. In what follows, then, my primary concern will not be to interrogate the extent of Freud's

[78] In her dense but rewarding study, *Derrida on Time*, Joanna Hodge locates Derrida's reading of Freud and Saussure at the fault line of his rupture with Husserl (Hodge 2007: 28). While Hodge stresses the importance of Freud's theory of temporality, in particular the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, in accounting for this rupture, I argue here that Freud's thinking of spatiality (whether natural, psychical, or virtual) is just as significant. The current chapter is thus be in some way antidotal to recent accounts of Derrida's work that have stressed the temporal implications of *différance* as decisive (Hodge 2007; Hägglund 2008; DeRoo 2013). Derrida's concept of spacing, I show, must be interpreted as the *articulation* of time and space, as the condition which renders their distinction possible and is as such reducible to neither.

indebtedness to the metaphysics of presence.[79] Instead, my aim is to examine those elements of Freud's work which press against the outer limits of this tradition, a tradition which I argue is exemplified in Derrida's early work by Husserlian phenomenology.[80]

I begin this chapter with a discussion of Derrida's concepts of 'écriture' and 'espacement', with the aim of providing a firm theoretical basis for the reading of phenomenology and psychoanalysis I propose. I then offer a brief contextual account of Derrida's early *formation* in phenomenology, before undertaking a close analysis of his deconstruction of Husserl's oppositional treatment of time and space in *La Voix et le phénomène*. Drawing on a series of references to psychoanalysis in this latter text, I turn to 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' in the second section of this chapter and show how Freud's complex account of temporality and neurological space is in several respects at odds with phenomenology's treatment of these categories as fundamentally discrete. In the final section, I show how Derrida's analysis of the dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams* responds to Husserl's search for a 'pure logical grammar'. As we shall see, at stake throughout 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' is a productive tension between Husserl's treatment of presence as the 'principle of principles' of all phenomenological enquiry and Freud's treatment of subjectivity in terms of non-presence, non-consciousness, and logical contradiction.

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[79] The degree of Freud's entrenchment in this tradition has been already examined by several readers of 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture': Wright 1985: 133-7; Howells 1998: 96-100; Ellmann 2000: 216-8. The most detailed account of the essay has been given by Johnson 1993: 65-108. Although I am indebted to Johnson's reading, my own treatment diverges from his in stressing the contrapuntal status of phenomenology in Derrida's reading of Freud.

[80] Studies of Derrida's relationship to the phenomenological tradition (Marrati 1998; Lawlor 2002) have given only slight consideration to the role of psychoanalysis in *La Voix et le phénomène*, specifically Derrida's remarks ('outraging Husserl scholars', according to Hodge 2007: 8) concerning Freud's notion of retroactive experience, *Nachträglichkeit*. In this chapter, my aim is to show how the theoretical friction between psychoanalysis and phenomenology extends beyond the issue of temporality and encompasses problems as diverse as space, language, ideality, and logic.

i. Derrida and Phenomenology

1. From Ecriture *to Spacing*

In his late dialogues with Elisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida is prompted to make a significant confession regarding his early familiarity with psychoanalysis. Until the mid-1960s, he concedes, his engagement with Freud had been occasional ('très fragmentaire'), inadequate ('insuffisante'), and conventional ('conventionnelle') (*DQD*, 275). It was only from 1965 onwards that he began to think about psychoanalysis in a serious and systematic way. Prior to this, his main concern had been to elaborate 'une problématique de la trace', something he viewed as critical to the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. In aid of this elaboration, he turned to Freud's concept of the memory trace as a way of investigating psychoanalysis's implication within this tradition. This examination lead to something of a 'turn' in his relationship to Freud. From this point onwards, he began to take account of the necessity of psychoanalysis in his philosophical work, a process which involved the interrogation of certain motifs first articulated in his work on Husserl: 'le primat du présent, de la présence pleine, dès lors aussi de la présence à soi et de la conscience'. It was in order to question the privilege habitually given to these values that Derrida began to consider the theoretical resources ('ressources') that psychoanalysis might offer (*DQD*, 275).

This investigation culminated in the writing of 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture'. Derrida describes this essay as a coming to terms with the 'logique' of the unconscious (*DQD*, 276), although he is careful to distance himself from this term (for reasons that will become apparent later in this chapter). It is worth noting that the psychoanalytic themes described by Derrida as most appealing to him are articulated in parallel with a number of concepts crucial to Husserlian phenomenology:

> il s'agissait des motifs de l'après-coup [*Nachträglichkeit*], du retard ou de la différance 'originaire', de tout ce qui ruinait ou menaçait l'autorité phénoménologique absolu du 'présent vivant' dans le mouvement de la temporalisation et de la constitution de l'ego ou de l'alter-ego, de la présentation du sens, de la vie et du présent dans la phénoménologie (*DQD*, 277-8).

As we shall see, in Derrida's examination of the role of 'presence' in psychoanalytic and phenomenological accounts of subjectivity, the status of writing in both discourses is critical. This is because Derrida's analysis of writing in the work of Husserl and Freud allows him to lay out the fundaments of a kind of 'writing' that is more general than writing in its conventional sense. Derrida's notion of *écriture* paradoxically refers both to a highly generalised process of inscription (spatialisation) and to a process which complicates our interpretation of an inscribed trace (temporisation).[81] Inscription is usually held to involve the tracing of a self-identical mark which endures through time. An inscribed trace need not necessarily be a physical trace, as in the case of conventional writing; it can also be, as in Freud's theory of the memory trace, a psychical trace inscribed in the virtual space of the unconscious. For Derrida, the supposedly stable character of these two types of inscription is possible only on the basis of the repression of a more general and dynamic process of *écriture*. In his early work, Derrida refers to this movement by a number of names: *différance*, trace, archi-trace, archi-writing, spacing. While I do not want to efface the differences between these 'substitutions non synonymiques' (*MP*, 13), each of these terms involves the same underlying process: a simultaneous movement of spatialisation and temporisation.

I have chosen to foreground the concept of spacing because the semantic economy of the French *espacement* best captures this dual process of spatialisation and temporisation. 'Espacement' can refer to the blank space between words in a sentence which are essential to identifying each word as distinct; the term thus connotes a certain distribution of spatial

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[81] To avoid an ambiguity that is strategic in Derrida's own analyses, I will use the word 'writing' to signify what Derrida refers to as writing 'au sens courant' (*G*, 182) and *écriture* to signify writing in the unique and more general sense which Derrida attaches to the word.

difference (spatialisation). At the same time, 'espacement' can refer to an interval or 'spacing out' between two events, thus implying a distribution of difference in time (temporisation). The spatialising movement of spacing involves the inscription of a mark which persists in spite of the continual deferral of present meaning, that is, in spite of the inexorable piling up of new differential contexts which troubles our interpretation of a mark. This perpetual deferral of present meaning is what Derrida refers to as the temporising movement of spacing, the insinuation of an irreducible contextual difference between every inscription and its interpretation (*MP*, 9).

Spacing both produces the possibility of a self-identical trace (since it introduces the minimal self-difference necessary for a trace to 'be' different from other traces) and undermines the coherence of this self-identity by permanently deferring full presence and introducing new spatio-temporal contexts which threaten the identical repetition of the trace. In order for something to appear to be identical with itself, it requires a minimal difference against which to define itself; yet this minimal difference also endangers the self-identity of the mark by introducing a plurality of contexts in which this mark is interpreted:

> il faut qu'un intervalle le sépare de ce qui n'est pas lui pour qu'il soit lui-même, mais cet intervalle qui le constitue en présent doit aussi du même coup diviser le présent en lui-même, partageant ainsi, avec le présent, tout ce qu'on peut penser à partir de lui [...]. Cet intervalle se constituant, se divisant dynamiquement, c'est ce qu'on peut appeler *espacement* (*MP*, 13-14).

One crucial consequence of Derrida's account of spacing is that our conception of time and space as stable categories is shown to be founded on an untenable appeal to temporal and spatial presence. For Derrida, time is always conceived according to the horizon of the present moment: the past is conceived as a moment that 'was' present, the future a present moment that 'will be'. Space, on the other hand, is conceived as that which is either present to consciousness or that which can be potentially made present to it. In both cases, the appeal to a supposedly pure point of presence conceals an underlying movement of spacing which both

enables and undermines our perception of time and space as coherent and discrete. Derrida claims that the temporal 'present' can only emerge through a differential relationship to an inscribed past and to a future that will be. Since the past and the future are in a perpetual state of becoming, there can be no stable and self-identical 'present' moment. 'Time' can only appear through its spatialisation because the present moment can only be grasped in its difference to the past, a past which itself must be inscribed in order to endure and thereby continue to modify the present. In the same way, 'space' can only appear with reference to the passing of 'time' because in order for a space to be conceivable it must be 'present' in spite of temporal succession, at different 'present' moments which are all unified by a single, spatial presence.

Derrida refers to this co-implication of time and space as a process of 'articulation':

> Origine et l'expérience de l'espace et du temps, cette écriture de la différence, ce tissu de la trace permet à la différence entre l'espace et le temps de s'articuler, d'apparaître comme telle dans l'unité d'une expérience (d'un 'même' vécu à partir d'un 'même' corps propre). [...] C'est de la possibilité première de cette articulation qu'il faut partir. La différence est l'articulation (*G,* 96).

The spacing of *différance* 'articulates' time and space by enabling time and space to appear as distinct categories (as in the vocal 'articulation' of discrete phonemes); at the same time, spacing 'articulates' space and time by soldering each category to the other in a relationship of inextricable dependency.

This function of spacing as temporal and spatial articulation suggests why Derrida is so interested in traditional philosophical distinctions between these two categories. The distinction between time and space, he argues, is founded on an ultimately untenable dissociation of spatial and temporal 'presence'. Albeit in different ways and to varying degrees, the categories of time and space are fundamental to Husserl's and Freud's respective projects. In the remainder of this section, I will examine Derrida's account of the phenomenological treatment of time and space as categories which are fundamentally

discontinuous. As we shall see, key to Husserl's analysis of the structure of our inner experience of time is the concept of a pure and self-identical present.

2. Derrida and Phenomenology, 1953-1967

To understand Derrida's rejection of phenomenology in 1967 and his turn to the resources offered by psychoanalysis, it is first necessary to outline his adoption and development of the phenomenological method from the early 1950s onwards. An impressive command of Husserl's work is already evident in Derrida's Masters thesis, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (1953-1954), a text which provides a panoramic treatment of the problem of 'genesis'—consciousness's constitution of a thing with a particular 'sense' or 'meaning' (*Sinn*)—as it both fascinated and troubled Husserl throughout his career. Although there is no extended treatment of Freud in this work, Derrida's study nonetheless contains a number of allusions to psychoanalytic theory.[82] Derrida's first major intervention in the field of phenomenology appeared almost a decade after this *mémoire*: an introduction to and translation of Husserl's 'The Origin of Geometry' (1962) (*IOG*). Derrida's lengthy introduction to this essay explores Husserl's account of 'genetic' phenomenology, a method of enquiry which seeks to uncover the historicity of senses produced by the active genesis of consciousness. In 'The Origin of Geometry', Husserl explores this method through the example of the history of geometry. Through a so-called 'regressive enquiry' (*Rückfrage*), Husserl argues that the 'forgotten' sense-experiences which gave rise to geometrical ideals can be repeated, or 'reawakened', using the procedure of genetic phenomenology. The parallels between this method and the method of psychoanalysis are obvious, even if explicit references to Freud's work are lacking in Derrida's introduction to Husserl's text.

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[82] The most significant of which involves Ricoeur's description of genetic phenomenology as a form of 'psychanalyse intentionnelle' (*PG*, 277).

This is not the case for Derrida's final and most significant study of Husserl's work: *La Voix et le phénomène: Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (1967). While Derrida's previous work had considered the complex relationship between writing and the constitution of idealities (namely, the problem of how geometrical ideals are passed down from one generation to the next), *La Voix et le phénomène* considers the equally complex relationship between speech and ideality in Husserl's phenomenology of language. For Derrida, the predominance of speech in Husserl's theory of language is indicative of phenomenology's 'phonocentrism': the privilege it accords to the speaking voice and to attendant values of presence, immediacy, life, and truth. At the same time, Husserl's phenomenological account of language provides a *meurtrière* through which several theoretical oppositions central to phenomenological enquiry can be deconstructed: notably, the oppositions between interior and exterior, psyche and world, time and space.

In order to establish the purity of these oppositions, Husserl has recourse to the phenomenological 'reduction' (*Reduktion*) (*HUA*, *II*, 5). This technical operation aims at returning—the Latin *reducere* indicates a return or a movement backwards—to the purity of inner, transcendental consciousness. To achieve this, the reduction must first 'bracket' or suspend empirical presuppositions about the external world (what Husserl refers to as the 'natural attitude'). In doing so, the phenomenologist gains access to ideal objects in a pure intuition of transcendental consciousness. For Husserl, it is only in the inner life of the psyche that consciousness escapes the ruses of the exterior world and grasps ideal essences in the immediacy of their presence to consciousness.

The originality of *La Voix et le phénomène* lies in Derrida's claim that Husserl's reduction of language constitutes a theoretical lynchpin tying together a number of other key phenomenological reductions, most importantly, for Derrida's account, the reduction of space from our pure, inner experience of time. Husserl's theory of language brackets the difficulties

posed by the functioning of language in the external world (for example, the semantic ambiguities involved in intersubjective forms of communication such as writing and verbal dialogue) with the aim of gaining access to what he calls the 'pure logical grammar' of language, the underlying logical rules which allow linguistic discourse to operate successfully. Husserl typifies this ideal functioning of language in the subject's 'silent' monologue with itself. In inner monologue, the ideal essences of words (their 'sense' or *Sinn*) can be grasped without the mediation of the signifier because they are immediately present to consciousness. In making this claim, however, Husserl is forced to maintain that if 'signs' do appear to operate as normal in interior monologue, then these 'signs' are only fictional.

In *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida argues that it is not the signs of inner psychical life which are fictional but rather the phenomenological reduction itself. He refers to Husserl's bracketing of the external world using the theatrical metaphor of a 'scène' (scene or stage). The figure recurs at several points throughout Derrida's reading of Husserl (e.g., *VP*, 16) but plays its most significant role in his description of Husserl's reduction of language. Derrida describes this reduction as a failed attempt at safeguarding the purity of inner psychical experience from the impurity of the external world (in which the sign always risks misinterpretation): 'le s'entendre-parler n'est pas l'intériorité d'un dedans clos sur soi, il est l'ouverture irréductible dans le dedans, [...] *La réduction phénoménologique est une scène*' (*VP*, 96).[83] For Derrida, Husserl's attempt at excluding space, and associated values of extendedness, materiality, and sensibility, from the pure temporal succession of inner psychical life is ultimately unsuccessful. The supposedly self-sufficient inner voice, he argues, is always dependent on what it attempts to exclude or reduce: the extended spatiality of a world 'outside' the psyche.

[83] As we shall see, this theatrical metaphor also plays a key role in 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture'.

Husserl's reduction of exterior language necessitates an appeal to the foundation-stone of all phenomenological enquiry: the living present (*lebendige Gegenwart*), which Derrida defines as 'l'évidence donatrice originaire, le *présent* ou la *présence* du sens à une intuition pleine et originaire' (*VP*, 3). In the immediacy of the living present, the object is always present to consciousness in an intuitive moment of pure presence (*II*, § 24). Crucial here is the dual form of this living present; in its 'sens connexes', it refers to both a spatial and temporal 'present' (*VP*, 8). The first sense of the word 'present' refers to what is extensively set forth as an object for intuition, the second refers to the temporal present that gives form to the intuition of the spatialised object.

In order to maintain that the 'scène' of inner experience is characterised by temporal succession alone, Husserl is obliged to confront the problematic existence of 'signs' in interior monologue. Husserl conceives the signifier as the spatialisation of an objective ideality, an inscription that enables the ideal essence to be communicated between individuals and passed down in a tradition (a claim central to his 'Origin of Geometry' fragment). It is because of this embodiment of ideality that 'communication' is said to occur only in so-called 'indicative' signs (*Anzeichen*), which Husserl defines in terms of their status as vectors of meaning. Unlike the signs of interior monologue, indicative signs are extended and sensible and thus subject to the dangerous ambiguity and contingency of communication in the external world. These signs are contrasted with the 'expressive' signs of inner psychical life, in which the ideal sense of a word is grasped instantaneously and without mediation. If indication is the becoming-external of interior expressive meaning, then Husserl must conceive ideal or expressive meaning (*Bedeutung*) as '*présent à soi* dans la vie d'un présent qui n'est pas encore sorti de soi dans le monde, dans l'espace, dans la nature' (*VP*, 44). This retreat into interior monologue means that any sensibility of the sign must be reduced to a voice speaking to itself. In this sense, the body of the interior sign is entirely eliminated. If indeed we

perceive signs in interior monologue, Husserl claims, these signs are merely imagined or fictional; they constitute only the 'représentation imaginaire' of a word (*Phantasievorstellung*) (*VP*, 48).

i. Phenomenological Time

The fifth and sixth chapters of *La Voix et le phénomène* lay out the bulk of Derrida's deconstruction of the phenomenological opposition between 'inner' time and 'external' space, an opposition in which, we have seen, Husserl's theory of language is always implicated. In the book's fifth chapter, Derrida interrogates Husserl's account of the purity of our inner experience of time. He does so by interrogating the theoretical foundation of this purity: the pure, present moment ('le pur maintenant' [*VP*, 81]). The metaphysical privileging of presence, Derrida argues, is expressed in Husserl's theory of temporality through the importance he attaches to this pure 'now' as a punctual point (*stigmē*). In order for Husserl's account of the noncommunicative and immediate nature of signs in solitary psychical life to be true, the self-presence of the subject in inner psychical life must be produced in the undivided unity of a temporal present. In his reading of Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893-1917), Derrida stresses Husserl's repeated attempts at reinforcing the opposition between the intuitive presentation of the now-point and the symbolic re-presentation of this moment. He is careful to point out that Husserl does indeed recognise that no now-point can be isolated as a punctual moment; lived experience is always extended since a punctual phase can never 'be' for itself (*PCIT*, § 19). Phenomenology's belonging to the metaphysics of presence will not be found, Derrida notes, in its attachment to a supposedly punctual moment. This belonging is instead expressed in Husserl's thinking of the present moment as a 'point-source' (*VP*, 69), as a form which persists despite changes in content and whose authority anchors experience and by extension all phenomenological

enquiry. Although the 'actual *now*' cannot be apprehended in its punctuality, it is 'necessarily something punctual and remains so, *a form that persists through continuous change of content*' (*II*, § 81). This privileging of the present moment is best understood through a metaphor Husserl repeatedly uses to describe the self's apprehension of this 'now': as the 'nucleus of [a] comet's tail of retentions' (*PCIT*, § 11). Even if it cannot be grasped in its punctuality, the actual now, as source-point, must be something that *persists* through the continuous change of experience.

At this point in his argument, having introduced Husserl's theory of an immutably present now-point, Derrida refers to one of the most compelling examples of 'une pensée de la non-présence' (*VP*, 70): psychoanalysis. Although *La Voix et le phénomène* contains numerous other references to psychoanalysis, this is certainly the text's most detailed and significant allusion to Freud.[84] Derrida compares the radical view of temporality implied by Freud's account of the retroactive experiencing of a traumatic event (*Nachträglichkeit*, translated as 'après coup' or 'deferred action') with phenomenology's attachment to the present as the 'point-source' of all experience. While I will return to the tension between these two approaches to temporality in the next section (ii.2), what is noteworthy here is Husserl's insistence on the absurdity (or 'senselessness') of the concept of 'unconscious' experience. In comparing the phenomenological and psychoanalytic theories of time, Derrida argues that 'ce n'est pas un hasard si les *Leçons sur la conscience intime du temps* confirment la dominance du présent et rejettent à la fois l'"après-coup" du devenir-conscient d'un "contenu inconscient", c'est-à-dire la structure de la temporalité impliquée par tous les textes de Freud' (*VP*, 70-1). This observation refers to Husserl's claim that

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[84] See, for example, Derrida's reference to 'le langage préconscient ou inconscient' in his discussion of Husserl's account of gesture and facial expression (*VP*, 38) and his reference to a 'lapsus' committed by Husserl in his discussion of 'indicative' (i.e. ambiguous) signs (*VP*, 46). In a long footnote, Derrida argues that Husserl's attachment to the value of presence renders phenomenology an accomplice (despite Husserl's protestations on this subject) of classical psychology (*VP*, 49-50, n.1). Later in this chapter, we shall see that Derrida is fascinated by the resistance of Freud's account of the psyche to positivist and naturalist treatments of the functioning of the mind (ii.1).

> it is a genuine absurdity to speak of an 'unconscious' content that becomes conscious after the fact [*nachträglich*]. Consciousness [*Bewußtsein*] is necessarily being-conscious [*Bewußtsein*] in each of its phases. [...] The retention of an unconscious content is impossible [...]. If each 'content' is in itself and necessarily 'originarily conscious', it would be absurd [*sinnlos*: literally 'meaningless'] to question one about a consciousness that would be given to it later (*PCIT*, 196-231) (*VP*, 71).

This rejection of 'unconscious content' as meaningless, as fundamentally un-grammatical and illogical, will be important in understanding Husserl's account of 'pure logical grammar', examined later in this chapter (iii).

Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's theory of time uncovers an irreducible non-presence at work in phenomenology's account of the present moment. This emphasis on non-presence echoes in several respects Freud's thinking of a constitutive delay in the becoming-conscious of unconscious experiences (*Nachträglichkeit*). Derrida argues that in the *stigmē* of the present moment the perceived object can only appear by being continuously compounded with non-presence. Non-presence is not added extraneously to the perceived now, but rather moments of non-perception 'participent indispensablement et essentiellement à sa possibilité' (*VP*, 72). Husserl's theoretical difficulties stem from the concept of 'retention'. According to Husserl, retention does not signify a simple 're-production' of past memory traces. In its strict sense, retention refers to the perceptions that 'have just' been perceived but have not yet been archived as memory traces and therefore continue to modify the present moment in the movement of its actuality. For Derrida, 'on peut donc soupçonner que si Husserl l'appelle [retention] néanmoins perception, c'est parce qu'il tient à ce que la discontinuité passe entre la rétention et la reproduction, entre la perception et l'imagination, etc., non entre la perception et la rétention' (*VP*, 72). Husserl's use of the notion of retention as a species of perception is aimed, therefore, at preserving the opposition between retention and reproduction. Indeed, Husserl later admits that '*perception and non-perception continually* pass over into one another' and that the 'ideal limit' separating perception from

memory is 'something abstract which can be nothing for itself' (*PCIT*, §16) (*VP*, 73). For Derrida, however, this admission is logically fatal: as soon as continuity is admitted between the now and not-now within the domain of the living present, then alterity is admitted into the self-identity of the present moment; the subject's pure solitude is shown to be radically undermined by the movement of 'time' itself.

Phenomenology's account of temporality as founded on a punctual now-point is radically at odds with Derrida's concept of spacing. Crucial to Derrida's thinking of spacing, we saw, is the notion of temporisation, the perpetual deferral of the present moment. For Derrida, the present moment never 'presents' itself in an intuitive moment of presence because every supposedly self-identical element (in this case, the punctual present) is always structurally dependent on what is different to it (in this case, the retained past). Without this minimal alterity, Derrida shows, there can be no be self-identical element. As we saw earlier, for Derrida 'il faut qu'un intervalle le sépare de ce qui n'est pas lui pour qu'il soit lui-même, mais cet intervalle qui le constitue en présent doit aussi du même coup diviser le présent en lui-même, partageant ainsi, avec le présent, tout ce qu'on peut penser à partier de lui (*MP*, 13-14). The present is only meaningful with reference to what is not present. Since perception and non-perception continually pass over into one another in the movement of 'retention', the punctuality of the present is always be deferred. The now-point is never 'present' as such because it is continually modified by its differential relationship to past and future moments.

ii. Phenomenological Space

The sixth chapter of *La Voix et le phénomène* examines Husserl's treatment of spatial presence. We have seen that Husserl defines the inner intuition of the living present as a pure experience of temporal succession. In order to do this, Husserl is obliged to exclude all

exteriority from the region of transcendental consciousness by insisting on the purely fictional status of signs in interior monologue. For Derrida, the difficulties Husserl experiences in his attempt to reinforce this opposition between interior purity and exterior impurity stem from his insistence on both retaining the existence of the sign in inner psychical life and simultaneously denying its most irreducible characteristics: spatiality, materiality, and sensibility. As he argues, 'le signe (*Zeichen*) renverrait toujours, en dernière instance, au *Zeigen*, à l'espace, à la visibilité, au champ et à l'horizon de ce qui est ob-jecté et pro-jeté, à la phénoménalité comme vis-à-vis et surface' (*VP*, 80).

Husserl claims that the circuit of enunciation and understanding is unbroken in interior monologue, a circle in which, as Derrida puts it, '*la voix s'entend*' (*VP*, 85). This is because, Husserl argues, the signs we use in 'communicating' with ourselves do not leave the realm of psychical interiority. There is thus nothing worldly or exteriorising in inner speech (*VP*, 86-7). By highlighting the irreducible *substance* of expression (that is, its physical, sensible qualities), Derrida shows how the speaking-hearing circuit is always already broken. As in his deconstruction of phenomenological temporality, Derrida reasons that as soon as the alterity of non-presence is authorised as the condition for self-presence, then no pure transcendental reduction of space can be possible. In order to highlight the necessity of spatiality in Husserl's account of the subject's presence-to-self, Derrida returns to Husserl's account of inner psychical life as an experience of temporal succession. Husserl maintains that the 'point-source' of the present moment is always self-engendering. The difficulty with this assertion, for Derrida, relates to the quasi-mystical manner in which Husserl describes this source-point. Derrida argues that every language fails to describe a 'pure' origin of subjectivity such as this except through metaphor, by 'borrowing' concepts from other orders of experience.[85] Husserl continually warns us to be wary of such metaphors, but admits that we can only ever grasp the

[85] This argument reappears in Derrida's analysis of Paul Valéry's theory of subjectivity (*MP*, 325-63).

meaning of this origin through the detour of figurative language, for example, in phrases such as 'flux' or 'movement' (*VP*, 94, n.1). For Derrida, this detour of metaphor implies the irreducibility of inscription (exteriorisation, spatialisation) at the supposedly pure source of subjectivity: the now-point. This is because if we cannot speak about a 'point-source' from which the subject wells up without recourse to metaphorisation (metaphoricity being, Husserl tells us, solely a property of worldly or indicative signs), then the absolute subjectivity on which phenomenological enquiry depends must be crossed out. It cannot be said to 'exist' without a constitutive spatialisation which pre-forms, indicatively, a pre-existing essence that is supposedly free of indication.

In phenomenology, the purity of inner psychical life is possible only on the basis of a pre-conditional spatiality. Husserl's emphasis here on the apparent 'génération spontanée' (*VP*, 95) of the living present conceals the underlying auto-affection of time: the living present must affect itself ('s'affecter'), inscribe or spatialise itself, in order both to be 'now' and to be retained in another now. In this same footnote (*VP*, 94, n.1), Derrida defines the relationship between temporality and spacing as the necessary relationship of the present moment to its outside, to an 'other' present moment. We can only become aware of the passing of time with reference to an irreducible spatial point, such as the movement of hands around the face of a clock or the passing of a shadow across a sundial. In the same way, the inner subject can become itself only by inscribing itself through a form of supplementary technics (speech, writing, a mirror, etc.). But by 'falling' into the exteriority of indication, the subject becomes estranged from itself because the temporising force of spacing immediately outdates any inscription, however enduring its 'permanent' form.

This unconditional cross-contamination of time and space characterises what Derrida calls the 'trace'. The trace is defined in *La Voix et le phénomène* as 'le rapport de l'intimité du présent vivant à son dehors, l'ouverture à l'extériorité en général, au non-propre, etc.'. For

Derrida, '*la temporalisation du sens est d'entrée de jeu "espacement"*' (*VP*, 96). One confusion that can result from Derrida's thinking of the spacing of the trace relates to the way in which Derrida portrays *espacement* both as the temporal 'délai' that undermines all spatial presence *and* as the becoming-space of time (spatialisation, inscription, exteriorisation). Derrida repeatedly warns against reducing this dual characteristic of spacing: 'la différance marque donc l'irréductibilité de la temporisation, qui est aussi *temporalisation*, ce que, dans le langage transcendental qui ne suffit pas ici, on appellerait la constitution de la temporalité originaire, comme *l'espacement est aussi constitution de la spatialité originaire*'.[86] This constitutive becoming-space of time forbids any absolute inside, such as Husserl's purely temporal interiority, since such an inside must always already be invaded by the spatialisation of an outside: 'l'espace est "dans" le temps, il est la pure sortie hors de soi du temps, il est le hors-de-soi comme rapport à soi du temps' (*VP*, 96). For Derrida, the exteriority of space does not overtake time, *après-coup*, but constitutes it as such by enabling its appearance.

With this brief outline of the phenomenological account of time and space in mind, in the next section we shall see how a number of problems central to Derrida's discussion of spatialisation and temporisation in *La Voix et le phénomène* are also present in 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture'. The publication of *La Voix et le phénomène* shortly after 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' (1966) generates numerous references to the Freudian theory of temporality and subjectivity in what is otherwise a close textual analysis of Husserl's theory of language.

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[86] This citation is taken from the abstract of 'La différance', published in addition to opening remarks and a lively closing discussion in the *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, No. 3 (July-September, 1968): 74 (my italics).

ii. Derrida and Psychoanalysis: Space and Time

La Voix et le phénomène offers a detailed account of the privileged role of speech in Husserl's phenomenology of language. According to Derrida's argument, Husserl's phonocentric opposition between the 'expressive' signs of inner monologue and the 'indicative' signs of the external world communicates with a number of other asymmetrical oppositions central to the metaphysics of presence: the opposition between ideality and worldliness, interiority and exteriority, and time and space. In contrast to phenomenology's privileging of the voice and spoken language, Derrida's 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' shows how Freud's description of psychical life is dominated by the metaphor of writing. In turning to Freud's use of writing as a didactic analogy for the functioning of the mind, Derrida argues that the psychoanalytic treatment of memory as a process of psychical inscription complicates in a number of respects the relationship between psychoanalysis and the metaphysics of presence.

Although Derrida stresses that *all* of Freud's concepts belong, 'sans aucune exception', to the history of metaphysics, he also highlights a number of elements within Freud's theoretical apparatus which are resistant to this tradition (*ED*, 296). In his 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', Freud's stated aim is 'to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science' (*SE*, *I*, 295). As Derrida demonstrates, however, this aim is frustrated by the model of the psyche proposed by Freud in this text. Although Freud attempts to provide an empirical account of memory and perception, insufficiencies in scientific knowledge oblige him to construct a model of the mind that is largely hypothetical, to narrate what Derrida calls a 'fable neurologique' (*ED*, 298). Derrida is interested in this speculative account of the histology of the psyche because it reveals Freud's theoretical reticence or 'nominalisme' (*ED*, 294) with respect to his own conceptual hypotheses. Freud is careful, for example, to leave his model open to revision in the context of future neurological research, a field of study then in its infancy (*SE*, *I*, 297).

Derrida is equally fascinated, however, by the audacity with which Freud pursues his hypothetical account of memory and perception. Nowhere is this audacity clearer than in Freud's concept of breaching (*Bahnung*), the theoretical basis of his account of the mnemic and perceptual functions of the mind. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', breaching refers to a physical alteration made by a quantity of psychical energy (or 'excitation') as it passes through a neuronal contact-barrier (*SE*, *I*, 300). This neuronal 'inscription' leaves a permanent trace of the excitation in its wake, a process Freud uses to explain the origin of memory. As we shall see, Freud's theory of breaching proves recalcitrant in several ways to a thinking of space and time founded on the value of presence.

1. Spatial Difference

Much of the originality of Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' vis-à-vis late nineteenth century neurology lies in its rejection of the positivist distinction between 'perceptual-cells' and 'mnemic cells' (*SE*, *I*, 299). In order to meet the two principal requirements of a model of the psyche—an unlimited capacity for the reception of new qualities (perception) and an unlimited capacity to retain these qualities (memory)—Freud instead proposes a model based on the breaching of contact-barriers. In elaborating on this process of breaching, Freud distinguishes between two types of neurones: permeable neurones (which offer no resistance, receive no trace, and are therefore suited to the requirements of perception) and impermeable neurones (which offer resistance to external impressions in the form of a contact-barrier and thereby enable memory to be 'represented') (*SE*, *I*, 300). While this distinction may seem to fall back into a naturalistic account of localisable perception-cells and memory-cells, Derrida argues that Freud's neuronal model in fact exceeds the discourse of the natural sciences in a number of critical respects.

Derrida is drawn to Freud's reluctance to localise these two types of neurones, to bind their essential function to a predetermined, physiological position within the human anatomy. He interprets Freud's reluctance in this regard as a partial resistance to the scientific positivism of contemporary 'classical' psychology. With regard to the distinction between permeable and impermeable neurones, for instance, Freud admits that 'morphologically (that is histologically) nothing is known in support of this distinction' (SE, I, 302).[87] For Derrida, this absence of explicit anatomical reference points towards Freud's later description of the psyche in terms of a purely virtual topography; it suggests how Freud, as early as the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', has already begun to break with the requirements of a psychology founded on values of presence, localisation, and essence.

According to Derrida, the neurological fable Freud presents in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' cannot be reduced to 'l'espace extérieur, familier et constitué, le dehors des sciences naturelles' (*ED*, 303). This is largely because Freud is unwilling to enforce any essential distinction between neuronal types. The function of each neurone is the result neither of a pre-formed, ideal essence nor of the physiological location of the neurone itself. Instead, Freud's neurones adopt their function based on their variable distribution within the overall neurological system. In this way, his model rejects any preconceived 'difference in essence' (*Wesenverschiedenheit*) between neuronal types. Instead, Freud embraces a contextual difference as decisive, a difference 'in the environment to which [the neurones] are destined' [*Schicksals-Milieuverschiedenheit*] (*SE*, *I*, 304; *ED*, 303). For Derrida, this non-substantive account of the functioning of the psyche signals the intransigence of Freud's early work both to classical psychology, which emphasises present and localisable space as determinative of mental functioning *and* to phenomenology's insistence on the role of ideal essences in psychical life. Freud's description of the neuronal system is based on

[87] The French translation cited by Derrida emphasises this lack of physiological foundation: 'n'a aucune assise reconnue, du moins quant à la morphologie, c'est-à-dire à l'histologie' (*ED*, 303).

structural relations ('différences pure, différences de situation, de connexion, de localisation, de relations structurelles plus importantes que les termes du support') rather than spatially present neurones with a predetermined essence (*ED*, 303). In this way, his account of psychical life 'échappe aux prises d'un "naturalisme" aussi bien que d'une "phénoménologie"' (*ED*, 300).

In addition to its problematic treatment of anatomical space, Freud's account of breaching also proves intransigent to positivistic psychology in its theorisation of memory. According to the positivist view, the memory of an experience (or quality) endures because of the passage of a particular quantity of excitation through a spatial form; this passage of excitation inscribes a permanent trace which can be reactivated later by diverting excitation to this same location. The opposition between energy (force) and its spatialisation (form) at stake here is also critical, we saw, to Husserlian phenomenology, which attempts to safeguard the distinction between the ideal essences grasped by consciousness and their material inscription in the world.

Freud's account of breaching proves problematic from the point of view of this force-form opposition. The process of breaching involves the spatialisation of force, the violent 'effraction' of a quantity of energy as it passes through and punctures a particular contact-barrier (*ED*, 301). The later passage of quantity through a contact-barrier allows the memory to be retrieved, as the re-presentation of a particular qualitative experience of the world. Although, as Derrida notes, Freud's theory of breaching here appears to be working within a conventional, positivist distinction between quality and quantity, his theory of memory is in fact highly resistant to the latter. It is particularly problematic from the point of view of spatial presence. As Freud himself points out, any attempt to account for memory solely in terms of the breaching of a contact-barrier by excitation (that is, in terms of a stable opposition between energetic force and its formal inscription) would fail to explain the functioning of

memory. This is because, Freud argues, memory would be immobilised if there were any equality of resistance to the passage of excitation. If the contact-barriers were equally resistant, there would no preference in the itinerary of excitation and the function of memory would be paralysed (*ED*, 299). Derrida is fascinated by Freud's response to this difficulty. Once again, Freud emphasises a *contextual* difference of space as decisive. Memory is not to be found, he claims, in a localisable network of breaches which are identical in form. Instead, 'memory is represented by the differences in the breaches of the [impermeable] neurones' (*SE*, *1*, 300).[88] For Freud, the mnemic process does not originate in the spatial presence of a determinable vessel (or form) but in the intangible ('insaisissible') differences between breaches (*ED*, 299). Memory is thus reducible neither to the cathexis of a dead form by a living force, nor to the animation of a passive signifier by a prior existing signified; it arises instead from the non-localisable differences between spatial breaches.

The crucial test for determining the relationship between the process of breaching and this 'plénitude' of presence, however, will lie in Freud's treatment of the *repetition* of memory. In Husserl's account of re-presentation, the ideality of the living present guarantees the identical repetition of meaning (*Sinn*) in spite of different temporal and spatial contexts. According to Derrida, the living present constitutes 'la forme ultime de l'idéalité, celle dans laquelle en dernière instance on peut anticiper ou rappeler toute répétition' (*VP*, 11-12). Husserl's reduction of the dangerous exteriority of writing aims at showing how the repetition of a word is guaranteed by ideal essences that can always be grasped in the purity of transcendental consciousness. As Derrida shows in his reading of Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', however, this distinction between an ideal signified (force, quality) and its embodiment in the signifier (form, quantity) can only be applied to Freud's theory of mnemic breaching with some difficulty. Indeed, Freud's discussion of the memory trace is in

[88] In the German manuscript, 'differences' (*Unterschiede*) is underlined twice (GW, *Nachtragsband*, 393, n.).

several respects incompatible with the classical logic of repetition (what is repeated remains self-identical and unmodified by what repeats it) exemplified in Husserl's account of ideality.

Derrida notes that Freud's account of the repetition of a memory trace stresses the irreducibility of difference in every act of repetition. This minimal difference refers to the number of times a particular impression is repeated or remembered. Freud claims that 'the memory of an experience (that is, its continuing operative power [*Macht*: force]) depends on a factor which is called the magnitude [quantity] of the impression and on the frequency with which the same impression is repeated' (*SE*, *I*, 300). For Derrida, the two types of quantity at stake here (the quantity of the original excitation and the quantity of the number of repetitions of this impression) are of an entirely heterogenous order (*ED*, 300). Freud claims that there is in every mnemic repetition a minimal difference introduced by the number of repetitions of that memory. This difference does not stem from the static ideality of Husserl's forms (in which the influence of repetition on memory is neutralised) but from a diachronic difference, that is, the number of times a memory is repeated across a given temporal interval. This means that, according to Freud's account, 'il n'est de répétitions que discrètes et elles n'agissent comme telles que par le diastème qui les tient écartées' (*ED*, 300). Freud's discussion of the repetition of a memory is thus resistant to the classical logic of repetition and in this sense prefigures Derrida's account of spacing as the irreducible insinuation of difference in every repetition of a trace.

2. *Temporal Difference*

We saw earlier that Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action) is invoked at a critical juncture in *La Voix et le phénomène*, namely Derrida's description of Husserl's phenomenological theory of temporality. According to Husserl, our experience of time

involves the perception of an unfolding sequence of 'now' points. The value of presence is vital here because the spatial and temporal 'present' forms the ideal horizon of all experience in general. In grounding his theory of time on the ideality of the living present, Husserl is obliged to locate a self-identical 'present' that endures despite continual changes in content. The non-contradictory character of this isolated present is what links Husserl's account of temporality to the question of logic. As we shall see in the final section of this chapter, Derrida associates any conception of time founded on a self-identical and thus non-contradictory present moment with the privilege accorded to the *logos*—or 'le temps de la logique' (*ED*, 321)—in Western culture.

Following his analysis of Freud's problematic treatment of neuronal space, Derrida turns to Freud's account of temporality in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology'. He argues that the numerous ways in which Freud theorises temporality, both here and in his later work, are all underpinned by a single movement: delay. The process of a temporal 'détour' (*Aufschub*) is fundamental to several of Freud's central theoretical oppositions; for example, the distinction between consciousness and the unconscious, between the pleasure and reality principles, and between the life and death drives. Underlying each of these oppositions, Derrida claims, is the attempt of life to protect itself against death by deferring ('en différant') a dangerously high quantity of excitation. Derrida's use of the gerund 'en différant' here is significant: the function of *deferring* ('différer') death is inextricable from the spatial *differentiation* ('différer') of too much excitation, from the binding of energy to a localisable reservoir ('réserve') (*Vorrat*) (*ED*, 300). This function of reserve is exemplified in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' by the phenomenon of breaching, in which the spatialised contact-barriers act to deaden external stimulus while also accumulating a stockpile of excitation: 'la dépense ou la présence menaçantes sont différées à l'aide du frayage et de la répétition' (*ED*, 300).

Once again, Derrida is interested in the role of repetition in this act of temporal delay. Freud describes the organism's protection against too much exterior excitation (that is, the inscription of a contact-barrier) as a process at work from the very beginning of the organism's life. For Derrida, this again suggests the difficulty of positioning Freud's theory of memory within a classical thinking of repetition, according to which what is repeated (memory) is primary and what repeats (its inscription) is secondary. On the contrary, what Freud's theory of breaching implies is that 'la répétition ne *survient* pas à l'impression première, sa possibilité est déjà là, dans le résistance offerte *la première fois* par les neurones psychiques' (*ED*, 301). This is because, according to Freud's account, there can be no penetration of external excitation (force) without the organism first offering some resistance to it in the form of a contact-barrier. If there were no contact-barriers, the organism could not survive the overwhelming amounts of stimulus coming from the external world. The life of the organism is thus originarily dependent on the inscription of memory traces (or deadening contact-barriers) capable of offering resistance to excessive external stimulus. For Derrida this means that in Freud's theory of mnemic repetition 'l'idée même de *première fois* [...] devient énigmatique' (*ED*, 301).

In a key footnote, Derrida stresses that the concept of originary delay ('retard originaire') was suggested not by his reading of Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' but by his reading of Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry'.[89] The process of originary delay, he points out, is unthinkable according to 'la logique de l'identité' (*ED*, 302, n.1), that is, any thinking of identity founded on the metaphysical principle of non-contradiction. I suggested earlier (i.2.i) that Husserl's thinking of time as a series of self-identical 'now-points' implies an intrinsic relationship between time and logic (what Derrida calls 'logocentrism'). Within the terms of Husserl's pure logical grammar, the concept of 'retard originaire' would no doubt

[89] See especially *IOG*, 170-1.

be meaningless or absurd (*sinnlos*). As Derrida points out here, however, it is 'l'absurdité' of this concept which allows us to think beyond both the logic of identity and a logical account of time as one of linear unfolding. The difficulty of thinking *différance* stems from its treatment of delay (spacing as temporisation) as something other than a relationship between two so-called 'present' moments ('présents'). For Derrida, conventional metaphysical accounts of time are misleading because they represent the movement of temporality in terms of a formula whose elements are logically self-identical and thus essentially immutable. He provides a concise formulation of this classical theory of temporality: 'n'arrive qu'en un présent B ce qui devait (aurait dû) se produire en un présent A ("antérieur")' (*ED*, 302, n.1).[90] As we saw in the previous section, this formula encapsulates the experience of time described by Husserl in his *Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness*: time is constituted as a sequence of self-identical and immutable present moments; the past is nothing but a present moment that was, the future a present moment that will be.

It is in contrast to this traditional account of temporality that the singularity of Freud's thesis of *Nachträglichkeit* becomes clear. The concept of *Nachträglichkeit* refers to the manner in which the significance of an impression or memory trace is subject to revision in the context of later experiences. The concept thus describes a certain provisionality or mutability in the self-identity of a 'past' experience. In an early letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud describes the structure of *Nachträglichkeit* in the following terms: 'I am working on the assumption that our psychical mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory-traces being subjected from time to time to a re-arrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances—to a re-transcription' (*SE*, *I*, 233). A concrete example of this process is given in Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology'. Here Freud details the case of a hysterical young woman who was unable to enter a shop

[90] Exemplified by the Aristotelian account of temporality (see below, footnote 93).

unless she was accompanied by a companion (*SE*, *I*, 353-5). He argues that the girl's irrational aversion stems from her repression of a pre-pubescent experience of molestation by a shopkeeper, the memory of which could only become conscious after the sexual awakening of puberty. In this way, the traumatic experience itself was not understood and was thus not fully conscious in the 'present' moment but only became meaningful *après coup*, after a constitutive period of delay.[91]

In his account of *Nachträglichkeit* in 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture', Derrida explicitly compares Freud's argument for the non-self-identity of past memory traces to Husserl's account of the past as a self-identical now-point that was once 'present': 'il n'y ait pas de pureté du présent vivant, tel est le thème, formidable pour l'histoire de la métaphysique, que Freud nous appelle à penser à travers une conceptualité inégale à la chose même' (*ED*, 314). Derrida locates the originality of Freud's thinking of time in its presentation of the *après-coup* as primary: what appears as 'secondary' in fact constitutes the 'original' that is repeated or represented. This irreducibility of originary delay is, he tells us, 'sans doute la découverte de Freud' (*ED*, 303).

In *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida returns to Freud's concept of deferred action in his discussion of Husserl's logocentric account of time. His reference to *Nachträglichkeit* (*VP*, 71) immediately follows his observation that Husserl's lectures on internal time consciousness must be systematically confronted with any theoretical position which promotes a conception of non-consciousness or non-presence, of a psyche that is not dominated by the idealised purity of the living present. What is noteworthy here is Derrida's citation of Husserl's explicit rejection of the notion of 'unconscious' content. Although Freud is not mentioned by name in his lectures on time consciousness, Husserl nonetheless rejects any possibility of a delayed

[91] Laplanche and Pontalis locate the subversiveness of *Nachträglichkeit* in similar terms to Derrida: 'la notion vient d'abord interdire une interprétation sommaire qui déduirait la conception psychanalytique de l'histoire du sujet à un déterminisme linéaire envisageant seulement l'action du passé sur le présent. [...] Or, d'emblée, Freud a marqué que le sujet remanie après-coup les événements passés et que c'est ce remaniement qui leur confère un sens et même une efficacité ou un pouvoir pathogène' (1971: 33-4).

becoming-conscious of 'contenu inconscient', arguing that it is literally meaningless (*sinnlos*) to speak of an 'unconscious' mental content which only becomes conscious after the fact (*VP*, 71). This rejection is crucial because it indicates both the inviolability of the principle of presence in phenomenological enquiry and suggests that this inviolability is founded on the union of language, logic, and ideality in the *logos*—a theme to which we shall now turn.

iii. Derrida and Psychoanalysis: Phonē *and* Logos

Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', we saw, describes the workings of memory according to a system of mnemic breaches. Immediately following the completion of this manuscript, however, Freud recast his model of the mind in terms of the metaphor of writing (*ED*, 306). Previously described in terms of the puncturing of neuronal contact-barriers, Freud increasingly began to represent the workings of the psyche in terms of *Zeichen* (signs), *Niederschrift* (inscription), and *Umschrift* (transcription) (*LWF*, 207-15) (*BWF*, 217-26). For Derrida, this figural shift is critical. Unlike Husserl, Freud does not represent the psyche through the analogy of spoken discourse. Indeed, as we shall see, his use of the analogy of writing significantly complicates his account of the mind (*psychē*) and the relationship between language and logic (*logos*). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud's description of the dream-work as a kind of writing is remarkably free of the phonocentrism which dominates Husserl's description of inner psychical life. More importantly, Freud's use of the metaphor of writing also proves resistant to what this phonocentrism implies: language regulated according to the truth of ideal univocity and underlying logic. In order to grasp this subversive character of Freud's account of dreams, we must compare what Husserl calls the 'pure logical grammar' (*VP*, 61, n.1) underpinning our everyday use of language with Freud's discussion of

the dream-work, a process in which, according to Derrida, 'le rêveur invente sa propre grammaire' (*ED*, 310).

Husserl's argument for the interdependency of logic, grammar, and language is found in his early *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901), published in the same year as Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Broadly speaking, Husserl's theory of language can be summarised by the claim that metaphysics has forgotten the intrinsic link between language (the sign) and grammar (logic). Against a descriptive 'modern grammar' based on psychology and other empirical sciences, Husserl argues that 'the old idea of a universal, or even of an *a priori grammar*, has unquestionably acquired a foundation and a sphere of validity, from our pointing out that there are *a priori laws* which determine the possible forms of meaning' (*LI*, *II*, 49).

Derrida claims that by pursuing a universal logical grammar underlying and unifying the chaos of everyday linguistic usage, Husserl subordinates the sign to logic. His pure logical grammar proposes a system of rules which allows us to determine whether a discourse *is* a discourse; in Husserl's terms, whether a discourse has sense (*Sinn*) or is literally senseless (*VP*, 7). What is ultimately at stake in this account of language, Derrida contends, is a conception of linguistic meaning (or sense) which conforms to the dictates of ideal and thus univocal objectivity. Although an utterance may have no empirical reference (e.g. 'golden mountain'), it is still conceivable as an intentional object and is therefore classed by Husserl as sense-endowed (*sinnvoll*) (*LI*, *I*, 202). By definition, this pure logical grammar excludes as nonsensical utterances which cannot become intentional objects, such as 'Abracadabra' or 'Green is or' (*LI*, *I*, 201) (*VP*, 102). In this way, Husserl's theory of language is supported by the teleological intentionality of transcendental consciousness, 'un concept de *sens* lui-même déterminé à partir d'un *rapport à l'objet*' (*VP*, 110). For Derrida, this is only possible if Husserl defines meaning in general 'à partir de la vérité comme objectivité' (*VP*, 111).

Though a meaning may be represented by several different words ('lion', 'léon', Löwe'), its objectivity is guaranteed by idealities which ensure its identical and univocal repetition throughout time and space. The presence of these ideal meanings represents the 'ultime instance juridique' (*VP*, 8) for any phenomenological account of language.

This conception of language leads Husserl to reject the idea of 'unconscious' content as absurd. As we saw earlier, Husserl claims that 'the retention of an unconscious content is impossible [...]. If each "content" is in itself and necessarily "originarily conscious", it would be absurd [*sinnlos*] to question one about a consciousness that would be given to it later' (*ITC*, 196-231). We can now see that this rejection of the psychoanalytic hypothesis of unconscious content stems from Husserl's insistence on language as a fundamentally logico-grammatical structure. Indeed, as I will show here, phenomenology's theory of logical meaning is radically opposed to Freud's account of the unconscious 'logic' of the dream-work.

1. Dream Interpretation

Key to understanding Derrida's interest in Freud's method of dream interpretation is its resistance to phonocentrism. Phonocentrism is crucial to Husserl's account of pure logical grammar because the silent voice of interior monologue provides the model for all expressive (i.e. ideal) meaning. In solitary psychical life, 'signs' can only ever be fictional because ideal and non-communicative meanings are always already given to consciousness in their immediate form. As I suggested earlier, for Derrida much of the originality of *The Interpretation of Dreams* stems from its use of graphical (i.e., non-phonetic) metaphors to describe the functioning of the mind. Freud's theory of regression plays a crucial role in this bypassing of phonocentric models. In psychoanalytic discourse, 'regression' refers to the psyche's defensive return to a fixation-point in its earlier development. Although Freud uses

the term in three distinct senses ('la régression topique, temporelle et formelle' *ED*, 307), these senses are 'one at bottom and occur together as a rule' (*SE*, *V*, 548). Topographical regression concerns excitation passing through the psychical systems (unconscious, preconscious, consciousness) in an inverted manner; in the state of dreaming, for example, the unconscious is the primary stimulant of the other psychical systems. This topographical regression is related to an individual's temporal regression to an earlier stage of development, 'in so far as what is in question is a harking back to older psychical structures' (*SE*, *V*, 548). Derrida is most interested, however, in the third type of regression, so-called 'formal' regression, in which 'primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of usual ones' (*SE*, *V*, 548). These 'primitive' methods of representation, like the visuality of the theatrical stage (*scène*), are non-phonetic and non-verbal and thus explain, Freud claims, the predominance of sensuous images in dreams. Derrida is interested in this type of regression because it exemplifies Freud's representation of psychical life as a kind of writing, one which is closer to hieroglyphic writing and to Derrida's own account of *écriture* than it is to writing in the conventional sense.

This imbrication of psychoanalytic regression and Derrida's notion of *écriture* explains the latter's reference to the Freudian dreamscape as a 'chemin de retour dans un paysage d'écriture' (*ED*, 307). Freud conceives the dream as a form of non-verbal expression, a 'lithographie d'avant les mots' which requires a hermeneutic method attuned to its essentially non-phonetic character. For Derrida, the pre-verbal lithography of the dream is 'métaphonétique, non-linguistique, a-logique' and in this sense it is far removed from the ideal, logical grammar underpinning Husserl's phenomenology of language. Freud continually points out that a dream is not beholden to strict logical relations between different elements or dream fragments. Indeed, according to his theoretical framework, what is conventionally understood as 'logic' operates only in the regions of consciousness and the

preconscious. It is no accident, then, that the preconscious, as the topographical location of logic, is the 'lieu des représentations verbales' (*ED*, 307) and is, in this sense at least, much closer to what Husserl describes as 'inner psychical life'. As Derrida claimed in *La Voix et le phénomène*, Husserl's logical grammar is intrinsically tied to the *successive* structure of the speaking voice: the possibility of speech presupposes the principle of identity or non-contradiction between elements in a spoken utterance, something which is not at stake in Freud's description of the functioning of the dream-work. On the contrary, logical contradiction is essential to understanding the dream-work's distribution of meaning. To illustrate this, Derrida cites an observation made by Freud in the Wolf Man case-history: 'it was only a logical contradiction—which is not saying much' (*SE*, *XVII*, 79) (*ED*, 307).[92]

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud opposes his new, psychological method of dream interpretation to the conventional 'symbolic' method, which he argues is too universalising in its replacement of the dream by a single, coherent meaning. Freud also rejects what he calls the decoding method (*Chiffriermethode*), 'since it treats dreams as a kind of cryptography in which *each sign* [my italics; unlike the previous method, this decoding method isolates individual signifiers for interpretation] can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key' (*SE*, *IV*, 97) (*ED*, 308). This method makes use of a dream dictionary (*Traumbuch*) to locate a permanent, ideal, and objective code intended by the dream's surface-level content, something Freud dismisses as inconsistent with the true functioning of dreams.

For Derrida the originality of Freud's method of interpretation becomes clear when compared with its historical predecessors. He focuses on two *points de repères* in Freud's account of the history of dream interpretation. The first is the work of Artemidorus of Daldis, whom Freud claims introduced a crucial 'modification' in the theory of dream interpretation.

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[92] See also Derrida's references to what Freud calls the 'kettle logic' of the dream (e.g. *P*, 113; *D*, 137-8), already discussed in the Introduction to this thesis (3.iii).

Daldis's method payed less attention to universals and focussed instead on *contextual* differences as decisive, such as 'the character and circumstances of the dreamer'. For Daldis, the dream-signifier was thus no longer wedded to a single ideal signified; instead, 'the same dream-element will have a different meaning for a rich man, a married man or, let us say, an orator, from what is has for a poor man, a bachelor or a merchant' (*SE*, *IV*, 99).

The writings of Daldis, Derrida notes, were important for the English theologian William Warburton, who wrote a long treatise on the second *point de repère* in Freud's history of dream interpretation: the Egyptian system of hieroglyphics. Warburton's work draws a parallel between the complex system of hieroglyphic interpretation and the equally complex method of dream interpretation in Ancient Egypt. According to Warburton, the Egyptians believed that god had made man a gift of writing, the same god who was responsible for the strange content of their dreams. This intrinsic relationship meant that a dream interpreter needed only to return to the stock of hieroglyphic symbols in order to uncover the meaning of a dream. For Derrida, this method suggests that the Egyptians, like Freud, already conceived the dream as a kind of writing: 'les types de transposition onirique correspondaient à des condensations et à des déplacements déjà opérés et enregistrés dans le système des hiéroglyphes' (*ED*, 309). Spoken language—for phenomenology, the union of logic, truth, and presence in the *logos*—has little stake in the Egyptian science of dream interpretation: the bedrock of hermeneutic authority here is not the voice but a non-verbal pictorial script.

Derrida argues that Freud's innovation ('la coupure freudienne', *ED*, 310) goes beyond both the traditional form of dream interpretation and the hieroglyphic dream-writing of Ancient Egypt. Like the Egyptians, Freud conceives the dream as a kind of 'écriture originale' which, even when it puts words on the dream-stage ('en scène'), never allows itself to be dominated by verbal discourse. Freud represents the dream according to 'un modèle d'écriture irréducible à la parole et comportant, comme les hiéroglyphes, des éléments

pictographiques, idéogrammatiques et phonétiques' (*ED*, 310). The originality of Freud's breakthrough with respect to Egyptian dream interpretation relates to his thinking of dream-writing as fundamentally *non-derivative*. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud repeatedly undermines the conventional opposition between writing in its 'literal' sense and psychical writing as its metaphorical and secondary derivative. For Freud, psychical writing (the dream-text produced by the unconscious) is such a primal phenomenon that conventional writing —'écriture codée et visible "dans le monde"'—could only ever be a metaphor for the psyche. The significance of Derrida's insistence on the psychoanalytic theory of regression now becomes clear: if a dream 'follows old breaches' (*SE*, *I*, 340), as Freud claimed in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', it is because the psychoanalytic theory of the psyche does not 'progress' *from* conventional writing *to* the psyche but instead regresses from the psyche to writing in its most general sense: as inscription or *écriture* (or what Derrida here calls 'l'écriture "primaire"' [*ED*, 310]). Unlike conventional writing, Derrida argues, the psychical writing of the dream circulates in a network of constantly shifting structural relations and in doing so proves intransigent to code-dependent methods of interpretation based on objective idealities.

Nevertheless, Freud's account of dream-writing cannot entirely dispense with codification. As Derrida is careful to note, psychoanalytic interpretation is still obliged to work within a pre-given language that has been imposed on the individual; it must still negotiate 'une masse d'éléments codifiés au cours d'une histoire individuelle ou collective' (*ED*, 309). In his interpretation of dream-writing, however, Freud repeatedly draws attention to an irreducible 'résidu purement idiomatique [...], qui doit porter tout le poids de l'interprétation' (*ED*, 310). Unlike either the *Traumbuch* or *Chiffriermethode*, or the procedures of Artemidorus and the Egyptians, psychoanalysis places the weight of interpretation on the singularity of the dreamer's individual experience. In doing so Freud

admits something scandalous to Husserl's idea of a pure logical grammar: 'le rêveur invente sa propre grammaire' (*ED*, 310).

2. *Dream-Work*

For Derrida, then, the originality of Freud's account lies in its resistance to the kind of phonologocentric strictures which dominated Husserl's phenomenological approach. In 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture', Derrida offers a succinct definition of the *logos* as 'le temps de la logique' (*ED*, 321). In order to understand how Freud's theory of dreams both partakes in and undermines the latter, Derrida offers a brief account of his own notion of *écriture* (*ED*, 321). *Ecriture*, he explains, is the process that logocentrism must begin by disavowing. It refers to the movement of spacing in its temporal and spatial senses: the differential interval or diastem separating two elements in a given structure. Although it ultimately prevents these two elements from cohering, *écriture* also imbues each element with a sense of self-identity by ensuring an irreducible difference between each element in the signifying structure. While it enables 'le devenir-espace du temps' (*ED*, 321), as the inscription of a mark which endures in spite of the flux of temporality, *écriture* also outdates this inscription in advance by piling up new differential contexts which trouble the interpretation of these spatialised marks: 'déploiement aussi, dans une localité originale, de significations' (*ED*, 321).

This inexorable piling up of new contexts is repressed ('refouler') by logocentrism's insistence on 'la consécution linéaire', a sequencing which it presents as irreversible (*ED*,

321).[93] According to the conventional metaphysical theory of time, founded on the principle of non-contradiction, this sequence passes 'de point de présence en point de présence' (*ED*, 321). As we saw in Derrida's reading of Husserl's *Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness* (i. 2.i), the present moment must be essentially different from past and future moments in order for it to be identifiable as the 'present'. Derrida rejects this account of stable, linear, and successive temporality because, he claims, it is founded on an untenable application of the principle of non-contradiction to our experience of time.[94] As suggested by his reference to *Nachträglichkeit* in his analysis of phenomenological time in *La Voix et le phénomène*, for Derrida time does not proceed in a logical succession of 'now' points, leaving self-identical and thus unmodifiable past-presents behind as it projects itself forward. Instead, the identity of the past is ceaselessly modified by a 'present' that reconstitutes its meaning through a continual process of spacing. The differential interval separating the 'past' from the 'present' is in a constant state of transformation; new contexts and 'significations' are inexorably accumulated; the past moment is thus never wholly identical with itself.

In his lectures, Husserl conceives the relationship between time and the appearance of a phenomenon in terms of the temporal successiveness of the object's presence to transcendental consciousness. Freud's account of the *scène* of the dream, however, proves resistant to this thinking of the linear and logical unfolding of temporality (logocentrism). For

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[93] Derrida provides a concise definition of logocentrism at the outset of 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture'. Since Plato, the logocentric history of Western metaphysics has prioritised speech at the expense of writing, privileging values of self-presence and self-authenticating knowledge over the dangerous exteriority of writing. This repression of the written mark 'constitue l'origine de la philosophie comme *épistémè*; de la vérité comme unité du *logos* et de la *phonè*' (*ED*, 293). This bias is described as *logos*-centric because the word *logos* gathers together a number of foundational values of Western philosophy: *logos* as 'spoken word', *logos* as 'truth', and *logos* as 'logic' or 'reason'. In his prefatory remarks, Derrida underscores 'le rapport entre *phonè* et conscience' (*ED*, 294) in Freud's work, specifically, 'le concept freudien de représentation verbale comme préconscience' (*ED*, 294). As we shall see, while Freud's conception of the preconscious as the domain of verbal representation and logic betrays psychoanalysis's 'logo-phonocentrisme' (*ED*, 294), Freud also figures the unconscious dreamscape as a kind of writing in which the priority of speech and logic are circumvented, thereby significantly complicating his position within the Western metaphysical tradition. For a more detailed account of logocentrism in Derrida's work, see Johnson 1993: 65-7. On *écriture* as 'pre-logic', see Hobson 1998: 220-4.

[94] The quintessential formulation of which is given in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'evidently then such a principle is the most certain of all [...]. It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject' (1984: 1005b)**.**

Derrida, the notion of phonetic writing is always complicit in some sense with the *logos* (logic, reason, spoken language) because the time of logic and spoken discourse is one of successive progression in which there is no contradiction between self-identical points. As per the law of non-contradiction, no two points are ever simultaneous in time or space. This is, or appears to be, the case with the linear successiveness of spoken language, whether what is at stake is real 'exterior' speech or the soliloquy of Husserl's solitary psychical life. Derrida refers to this principle of non-contradiction in time and space as the 'fondement de toute la métaphysique de la présence' (*ED*, 321), a foundation which he argues is ultimately insecure. Against this view, Derrida claims that all meaning is always already caught up in a process of spacing which undermines the concept of a simple, linear succession of present moments. There is always an irreducible silent spacing at work in language which both constitutes and undermines the apparent presence of phonetic writing (for example, the necessity of a very real spacing between printed letters) and spoken language (in which spacing is not reducible to the 'pauses' between spoken words). Crucially, Derrida argues, it is because of the irreducibility of this non-phonetic process of spacing that concatenations of meaning are possible which no longer correspond to the linearity of logical time. Derrida draws a parallel here between the latter and the time of consciousness or the preconscious, which, as he claims, is fundamentally a space of 'verbal representations' and thus of logic (*ED*, 321).

In Freud's account of the unfolding of the dream, for example, the border between the non-phonetic 'space' of writing and the 'space' of the dream scene becomes increasingly confused. When he wishes to evoke logico-temporal relations between dream elements, Freud has recourse to *non*-phonetic examples of writing, notably 'la synopsis spatiale du pictogramme, du rébus, du hiéroglyphe' (*ED*, 321). Spoken language is in principle inadequate as an analogy for the non-linear time of the dream. In each of these three examples (pictogram, rebus, hieroglyph), at stake is a structure not of stasis but of *synopsis*, an

economic and non-linear condensation of meaning. For Derrida, it is critical that Freud conceives the dream-scene here as possessing a lapidary ('lapidaire') quality. This quality of aesthetic condensation means that Freud does not reduce the dream to 'la présence impassible de signes pétrifiées' (*ED*, 322). Indeed, Freud claims that dreams are always highly abridged forms of expression and therefore by their very nature call for an act of interpretation (*SE*, *IV*, 279) (*ED*, 321, n.1).

Key to understanding the resistance of Freud's account of dreams to a number of logocentric strictures is the so-called 'dream-work', the process by which latent and unconscious thoughts are 'scrambled' to allow them to slip past the psychical censor and into consciousness. According to Freud's hermeneutic method, the analyst must begin by dividing the dream into discrete elements in order to contend with the complex work of condensation and displacement. Derrida is fascinated by the flip-side of this process: namely, the synthetic quality of the dream-work, the manner in which it composes and stages ('met en scène') the dream as a whole. This *mise en scène* of the dream (*die Darstellungsmittel*) proves crucial for Derrida's analysis of the relationship between dreams and logic. Among the many means available to the dream-work for the putting on stage of latent thoughts, of particular importance is the non-linear 'polycentrisme' of dream representation. For Derrida, this polycentrism is ultimately irreconcilable with the uni-linear unfolding ('déroulement') of pure verbal representations. This is because in dreams 'la structure logique et idéale du discours conscient doit donc se soumettre au système du rève' (*ED*, 322). Derrida recalls that the elements of the dream as a whole stand in relation to each other according to 'des relations logiques très variées' (*ED*, 322). In the scene of the dream itself, the principle of non-contradiction is frequently violated: a single element can represent contradictory ideas. The dream-work gathers together the various elements of the dream-thoughts, breaks them into fragments, and jams them together ('almost like pack-ice', *SE*, *IV*, 312) such that it becomes

difficult to isolate discrete thus self-identical elements in either the time or space of the dream.

A question then arises: what representation (*mise en scène*) does the dream-work give to logical connectors such as 'if', 'because', 'although', 'either-or' which habitually rivet spoken and written language to an underlying logical structure? Freud argues that connectors such as these have no place in the dream and can only be restored afterwards by conscious articulation: 'the restoration of the connections which the dream-work has destroyed is a task which has to be performed by the interpretative process' (*SE*, *IV*, 312). Certain dreams may *appear* to portray extremely complex ideas, in which statements are 'contradicted or confirmed, ridiculed or compared, just as they are in waking thought' (*SE*, *IV*, 313). What is reproduced by this 'ostensible thinking', however, is only the substance (that is, the content) of dream-thoughts and not 'the mutual relations between them, the assertion of which constitutes thinking' (*SE*, *IV*, 313). For Freud, dreams do not and cannot 'think' because thinking always implies logical relations between elements.

This conclusion underpins Freud's rejection of spoken language in dreams. Freud again reduces speech here to the *substantive* content of the dream: 'all spoken sentences which occur in dreams and are specifically described as such are unmodified or slightly modified reproductions of speeches which are also to be found among the recollections in the material of the dream-thoughts' (*SE*, *IV*, 313). Speech becomes just one more substantive element (indeed a relative one) in the general labour of the dream-work. Derrida is drawn to this subordination of spoken language in dreams for the same reason that he is drawn to Husserl's privileging of the spoken medium in inner psychical life. In Freud, the subordination of speech signifies a certain resistance to phonologocentrism, the principle of an underlying connection between speech, logic, and time. As Derrida shows, the purpose ('fonction') and dignity ('dignité') of speech changes radically in the dream-scene. Freud

argues that speech features in dreams in a way that is analogous to captions in comic strips, which Derrida refers to as 'cette picto-hiéroglyphique dans laquelle le texte phonétique est l'appoint, non le maître du récit' (*ED*, 322). Freud illustrates this subordination of speech in psychical writing with reference to classical paintings in which small labels were hung from the mouths of the figures represented, 'containing in written characters [*als Schrift*] the speeches which the artist despaired of representing pictorially' (*SE*, *V*, 312). As Derrida points out, the theatricality of the dream-work, its *mise en scène*, 'peut se comparer d'abord à ces formes d'expression qui sont comme l'écriture dans la parole' (*ED*, 323). On the stage of the Freudian dream, speech thus plays a subordinate role. As in hieroglyphics, and in the case of a rebus, 'la voix est circonvenue' (*ED*, 323). By contrast, as we saw in our reading of *La Voix et le phénomène*, the the voice is what always remains *incontournable* in Husserlian phenomenology.

While Derrida is fascinated by the subversive character of Freud's account of formal regression in dreams, psychoanalysis's method of dream interpretation also relies on a number of assumptions central to the metaphysics of presence. In order to highlight the metaphysical residues evident in psychoanalytic dream interpretation, Derrida turns to Freud's claim that dreams reproduce '*logical connection* by *simultaneity in time*' (*SE*, IV, 314). In this assertion, Freud links, as per 'le temps de la logique', simultaneity (a self-identical present) and logic in comparing the dream-work to the work of the painter of 'The School of Athens', which represents in one group philosophers who had never before been assembled in a single space and time. If we experience two elements in dreams that are close together, this 'guarantees that there is some specially intimate connection between what corresponds to them among the dream thoughts'. To explain this process, Freud has recourse to the metaphor of phonetic writing. Freud's use of this example, however, highlights the divided nature of his relationship to logocentrism, at least in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. On the one hand, Freud's use of

phonetic writing as an example to describe the *pictorialised* writing of dreams (*Bilderschrift*) links the dream-work to the time of logic (i.e., permanence, simultaneity, and succession, three Kantian categories evoked by Derrida later in the essay, *ED*, 332). On the other hand, Freud's example draws on a differential spacing that is resistant to the process of phoneticisation. In our system of writing, Freud points out, the signifier '*ab*' means that these letters are to be pronounced in a single syllable. If a blank space were placed between them, however, we would see 'a' as the last letter of the preceding word and 'b' the first letter of the next one (*SE*, *IV*, 314). Derrida concludes from this attention to a non-phonetic form of spacing that for Freud it is always hieroglyphic writing which best synthesises the different modalities and functions of the sign in dreams. As in hieroglyphics, it is structurally implied by every sign, irrespective of whether it is verbal or not, that it can potentially be used in a non-linear way, at different structural levels and at different points in the dream, in configurations and functions that are not prescribed according to an ideal and objective essence 'mais [qui] naissent du jeu de la différence' (*ED*, 325).

Freud's treatment of the relationship between the psyche on one hand and the *phonē* and *logos* on the other is therefore ambivalent. Despite psychoanalysis's difficult relationship to logocentrism, for Derrida Freud's breakthrough with regard to the latter lies in his staging of the dream as a 'scène de l'écriture' (*ED*, 338). As we have seen throughout this chapter, it is only by comparing this scene of psychical writing to Husserl's description of psychical life as a 'scène' of verbal (and thus successive and logical) discourse that the subversive character of psychoanalysis within the larger context of the metaphysics of presence becomes clear. By comparing the incongruence of the phenomenological and psychoanalytic approaches to signification, we can understand why and how Derrida turns to Freud's account of psychical writing as a strategic theoretical resource in his own deconstruction of logocentrism.

In choosing to structure his first extended treatment of Freud's work around the thematics of the trace and writing, Derrida suggests the extent to which the process of inscription is indissolubly caught up in a number of metaphysical problems central to phenomenology (time, space, subjectivity, etc.) and to psychoanalysis (the scientific nature of Freud's enquiry, the memory trace, perception, our experience of temporality). By broaching such a wide network of problems, 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' sets the stage for a dialogue between deconstruction and psychoanalysis that will be taken up again at every major stage of Derrida's career. Although Derrida's interest in Freud's 'incroyable mythologie' (*ED*, 337) and 'fable neurologique' (*ED*, 298) in this early essay is suggestive of a deeper interest in the relationship between scientific discourse and fiction, this theme will not be pursued until almost a decade later, with the publication of what is perhaps Derrida's most detailed and wide-ranging treatment of Freud's work: 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' (1980), a text to which we shall now turn.

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‘Spéculer—sur “Freud”’
Psychoanalysis between Science and Fiction

In its treatment of issues of naturalism, psychophysics, and the localisation of memory, ‘Freud et la scène de l’écriture’ is a text very much concerned with scientific knowledge and method. In one sense, this should come as no surprise. As early as his master’s thesis (1953-1954), Derrida undertook a detailed analysis of Husserl’s philosophy of science, specifically the fundamental (if vexed) role of writing in the constitution of ideal objectivities. By 1964, Derrida’s grasp of the development and shape of Husserl’s work on the historicity of the sciences was such that his introduction to ‘The Origin of Geometry’—a fragment appended to Husserl’s most substantial work on the philosophy of science, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1954)—was awarded the Prix Cavaillès for modern epistemology.

In another sense, however, this award may well seem incongruous today, especially in the context of other laureates whose work has been more readily associated with scientific concerns: Jean-Toussaint Desanti, Suzanne Bachelard, and Jacques Bouveresse.[95] It certainly seems incongruous given the popular association of Derrida’s work with a kind of postmodernist ‘textual idealism’ in which reality has no existence outside its textual codification.[96] The popularity of this association is clear from Derrida’s implication in two highly publicised affairs during the 1990s. In the first, the occasion of his awarding of an honorary doctorate from the University of Cambridge, Derrida was accused by several high-profile philosophers of cultivating ‘academic status based on what seems to us to be little

[95] Baring 2011: 146.

[96] Mooney 1999: 33. As representative of this view, see Rorty 1978, Ellis 1989, and Gross and Levitt 1994.

more than semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, objective truth, and scholarship'.[97] In the second incident, Derrida's work became a privileged target in the so-called 'Sokal Affair', a controversy which ensued in June 1996 following Alan Sokal's publication of a counterfeit article ('Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity') in the cultural studies journal *Social Text*. The article wove together a number of citations from leading (and predominantly French) 'postmodernist' thinkers such as Lacan, Kristeva, and Lyotard, purporting to show that the field of quantum gravity was at bottom only a social and linguistic construct.[98] The subsequent revelation of the article as a hoax gave rise to numerous public quarrels and polemics concerning the relationship between the 'natural sciences' and what in France are customarily called the human sciences. No doubt reflecting his status as a preeminent advocate of 'poststructuralist' philosophy, Derrida's work featured heavily in these debates. Nevertheless, although Derrida's name is prominent throughout Sokal's article, appearing twelve times (with a further eleven instances of the word 'deconstruction' and its variants), the only specific reference to his writings in the article is a short citation taken from off-the-cuff remarks made at a conference in 1966.[99]

In a follow-up book, *Intellectual impostures* (1998), written with the Belgian physicist and philosopher of science Jean Bricmont, Sokal's earlier indictment of Derrida's work seems to soften:

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[97] Barry Smith, Letter to *The Times* (London), May 1992, signed by W. V. O. Quine, David Armstrong, and René Thom, et al. Given this tendency to polarise 'continental' and 'analytic' traditions, Christopher Norris's work has attempted to present Derrida's early work on Husserl as facilitative of a dialogue between both traditions in the philosophy of science (see Norris 2000, especially chapter 3; and Norris 2005: 71-98).

[98] Sokal 1996. The article has been republished, with extensive annotations, in Sokal and Bricmont 1997 and again with further comments in Sokal 2008.

[99] In response to a question from Jean Hyppolite, Derrida remarked that 'the Einsteinian constant is not a constant, is not a center. It is the very concept of variability—it is, finally, the concept of the game' (Macksey and Donato 1970: 267). This statement is criticised by Sokal in later commentary on the original hoax article as 'utterly meaningless' (Sokal 2008: 26); a more sympathetic reading of Derrida's remarks is given by Plotnitsky 1997.

> Let us emphasize that these authors differ enormously in their attitude toward science and the importance they give it. They should not be lumped together in a single category [...]. For example, although the quotation from Derrida contained in Sokal's parody is rather amusing, it is a one-shot abuse; since there is no systematic misuse of (*or indeed attention to*) science in Derrida's work, there is no chapter on Derrida in this book.[100]

It is this latter claim that the current chapter takes issue with. As we shall see, Derrida's work does engage in a number of ways not only with contemporary scientific research but also with wider issues in the philosophy of science. Indeed, as Derrida pointed out in his brief response to the affair, far from being flippant or neglectful in his treatment of scientific themes, he is always 'économe et prudent dans l'usage de la référence scientifique'. By way of illustration, he cites an analysis of the analogies between the notion of the undecidable and Kurt Gödel's theorem of incompleteness in *La dissémination* (1972), analogies '[qui] n'ont été ni localisés ni visités par les censeurs' (*PM*, 280).

As Derrida suggests but does not develop here, it is incorrect to claim that his work is inattentive to scientific questions. He began his career, we saw, with a highly significant analysis of the historicity of science in Husserl. His most famous early work, *De la grammatologie,* involves a lengthy treatment of the difficult relationship between grammatology and the so-called 'positive' sciences (*G*, 109-42).[101] And in his later work, Derrida investigates the relationship between science and religion, notably in *Foi et savoir* (2001). One could object that these reflections on science, much like Derrida's work on literature, are principally concerned with more abstract questions, such as the generic boundaries between scientific and non-scientific texts. Derrida's work would thus pay little attention to more concrete scientific matters, such as recent advances in research or the more practical aspects of scientific method. This view is again hasty, however, since although Derrida is indeed concerned with the porousness of the boundaries between scientific and

[100] Sokal and Bricmont 1998: 8 (my emphasis).

[101] On Derrida's claim that grammatology is a 'positive' science, see Kirby 2010.

non-scientific texts, there are numerous examples in his work of the use of contemporary scientific research in aid of a particular deconstructive displacement.[102]

I do not want to suggest, however, that little critical work has been devoted to exploring the role of scientific themes in Derrida's work. A number of studies, particularly in latter years, have done much to clarify the relationship between deconstruction and science, whether in the more abstract terms of the philosophy of science or through the pursuit of more concrete references such as biology and technology.[103] None of these accounts, however, have identified the critical role of psychoanalysis in Derrida's relationship to scientific discourse. As we shall see in the current chapter, Derrida's 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' (1980), through a close textual analysis of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, examines the deeper complexities behind the customary dismissals of the scientific credentials of psychoanalysis. This text must therefore play a key role in any account of the status of scientific references in Derrida's work.

i. Pure Speculation

1. The Scientific Turn in French Phenomenology

Before turning to an analysis of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', I will first outline a number of themes in Derrida's early phenomenological writings that are critical to understanding his later reading of Freud. As we saw in the previous chapter, Derrida began his philosophical career with a lengthy introduction to and translation of a fragment appended to Husserl's

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[102] See, for example, Derrida's recourse to recent scientific research in his discussion of Lacan's denial of language to animals (*BS*, 164-5, n.3). One could also cite his various reflections on genetics, heredity, and reproductive technology in his dialogues with Elisabeth Roudinesco (*DQD*).

[103] The role of scientific references in Derrida's work has been of increasing interest to commentators, as a recent special issue of *Derrida Today* attests ('Deconstruction and Science', 2010: Vol 3, Issue 2). Marian Hobson has done much to clarify the status of empiricism in Derrida's writings, particularly in relation to Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology (see Hobson 1982 and Hobson 1998: 20-30). On the importance of biology, cybernetics, and information theory in Derrida's work, see Johnson 1998.

Crisis of European Sciences: 'L'Origine de la géométrie' (1962) (*IOG*). It is important to highlight the historical and philosophical context of this translation, as it clarifies how and why Derrida's early concern for the scientific dimensions of Husserl's work is part of a larger 'turn' in the French reception of phenomenology.

In contrast to the existentialist emphasis on a phenomenology of everyday life, younger philosophers of Derrida's generation began to stress the more historical and scientific elements of Husserl's work.[104] As Derrida told *Le Monde* in 1982, 'A cette époque, la phénoménologie se tournait plus volontiers, en France, vers les problèmes de l'existence, de la conscience perceptive ou pré-scientifiques. Une autre lecture de Husserl était aussi nécessaire, qui relancerait des questions sur la vérité, la science, l'objectivité' (*PS*, 83). Derrida's early work exemplifies this change in French philosophical approaches to phenomenology. He was among the first of Husserl's French readers to perceive the importance of the 42-page 'The Origin of Geometry' vis-à-vis the overall shape of Husserl's project. For Derrida, the originality of this text lay in its treatment of writing, intersubjectivity, and scientific progress as fundamentally interdependent notions. In his lengthy introduction to the text and in an earlier paper, '"Genèse et structure" et la phénoménologie' (1959) (*ED*, 229-49), Derrida dismisses the claim that Husserl's work can be divided into a pre-*Crisis of the European Sciences* 'static phenomenology' (concerned with the description of presented ideal objects) and a post-*Crisis* 'genetic phenomenology' (concerned with the origin of sense-meanings in direct experience and thus with the historicity of the sciences).[105] What is most significant about 'The Origin of Geometry' fragment, Derrida argues, is its insistence on the need for a dynamic interweaving of both methods of enquiry.

According to Husserl, the necessity of this interweaving has been precipitated by a modern 'crisis' in the European sciences. This crisis has been brought about by the increasing

[104] As evidenced by the publication of Tran Duc Thao 1951 and Lyotard 1992 [1954].

[105] This claim is made by Ricoeur 1949.

abstraction or mathematisation of these sciences which Husserl argues is coextensive with a 'forgetting' of their origins in sense experience. 'The Origin of Geometry' fragment functions both as a diagnosis and as a methodological cure for this 'forgetting'. In the new vocabulary of genetic phenomenology, the tradition of geometry has moved away from its 'meaning-origin' (*Sinnesursprung*) in an intuitive self-evidence given to the first geometer. The empirical experience of roundness, for example, has given way to an infinitely repeatable geometrical ideality: the circle. Through this idealisation or 'passage to the limit', geometry has retained the value 'circle' by clothing it in a symbolic language which hides its origin in a given sense perception (roundness). In this way, modern geometry has forgotten these originary perceptions and continues to proliferate on the basis of signs and symbols that have become detached from their original significance. As Husserl notes, before the advent of deductive techniques of reasoning, 'the logical superstructures did not yet rise so high that one could not return again and again to the original meaning' (*CES*, 368). The significance of this Babelian allusion will become clear later, when we turn to a more detailed treatment of the notion of scientific progress in the work of Husserl and Freud.

This detachment from ordinary lived experience has brought about the increased mathematisation of Western culture which Husserl claims is the greatest threat to the progress of the European *eidos*, which he defines as an 'infinite task' of knowledge and reason (*CES*, 72). It is this abstraction which calls for the fundamental methodological procedure of genetic phenomenology: *Rückfrage* ('questioning back' or 'question en retour' in Derrida's French translation). For Husserl, the original senses which gave rise to geometry are never wholly lost and can always be reawakened through a process of 'sense-investigation'. The major part of the 'The Origin of Geometry' is concerned with theorising this process of forgetting and recollection, with the final pages of the text presenting a concrete phenomenological description of the original self-evidences which must have given rise to geometry as we

recognise it today. Husserl acknowledges in the text's opening paragraph that his reflections will probe 'the deepest problems of meaning, problems of science and of the history of science in general, and indeed in the end [...] problems of a universal history in general' (*CES*, 353). It is in these reflections on science, history, and the constitution of objective idealities through language (and in particular through writing) that Derrida's 'Introduction' locates the originality of Husserl's essay.

2. Speculations: Bataille, Hegel, Freud

As we saw in Chapter 1, Derrida accords a contrapuntal value to Husserlian phenomenology in his reading of Freud. Similarly, in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', psychoanalysis plays an instrumental role in interrogating two characteristics of science fundamental to Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* and to Derrida's 'Introduction' to 'The Origin of Geometry'. First, Husserl's conceives science as a so-called 'Infinite Task' of reason, in which the scientific work of one generation builds on the foundations of previous generations through the *telos* of a shared purpose or task. Second, Husserl grounds scientific observation on the bedrock of the living present, in which the object is 'given' to the scientist in an intuitive moment of self-presence; this is the *archē* of science, its empirical origin and underlying theoretical principle.[106] In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida is fascinated by Freud's insistence on the role of 'speculation' (*Spekulation*) in scientific enquiry. Freud's notion of speculation, I argue, problematises both the *archē* and the *telos* of Husserl's philosophy of science. Not only does Freud's emphasis on speculation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* call into question the utility and indeed possibility of *all* scientific observation being derived from

[106] See the discussion of the living present in Chapter 1 (i.2). I have drawn these two characteristics from Derrida's discussion of Husserl's philosophy of science in his 'Introduction'. For a more detailed discussion of the living present as 'la Forme concrète absolue de la temporalité phénoménologique et l'Absolu primordial de toute vie transendentale', see *IOG*, 164-5. For a thorough account of the philosophical context of Husserl's notion of the Infinite Task of reason, see Gasché 2009 and Moran 2012.

the concrete givenness of the living present, it also calls into question the security of Husserl's linear view of scientific progress. Against Husserl's vision of science as an inexorable movement upwards towards the completion of its task, Freud conceives scientific progress as a process of 'limping', in which the possibility of the scientist's misstepping, and even movement backwards, remains an ever-present possibility (*SE*, *XVIII*, 64).

In order to investigate how Freud's concept of speculation undermines these two poles of Husserl's philosophy of science, we must first understand why Freud has recourse to a speculative procedure in the first place. It is no coincidence that 'speculation' first appears as a methodological procedure in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a text occupying a threshold in Freud's theoretical work. According to Strachey, it 'may be regarded as introducing the final phase of his views' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 5). Although the compulsion to repeat had been broached earlier in Freud's work, it is not until *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that he associates the psychical phenomenon of repetition with his theory of the drives. It is also in this text that Freud introduces his famous dichotomy between the life drives (collectively called 'Eros') and the death drive. According to Freud, the common purpose of the life drives is to assure both the organism's self-preservation and the larger procreation of the species. The death drive, on the other hand, is associated with aggression and dominance and the aim to return the organism to its original inorganic state, an inanimate state of zero stimulation. Freud's theory of the drives will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis. In the current chapter, my concern is principally with the methodological procedure required by Freud's hypothesis of a duality of drives: speculation.

In the previous chapter, we saw that even in his early work Freud is not averse to hypothetical speculation, particularly in cases of insufficiency of positive evidence (e.g., evidence of the concrete existence particular types of neurones) and inadequacies in scientific method or technological capability (e.g., in determining the chemical or physical events

which lie behind the process of excitation). In both cases, Freud argues, rather than abandoning the enquiry completely we can replace absent sense data with theoretical speculation. The speculative procedure of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* stems from Freud's failure to account for the repeated 'anxiety dreams' suffered by soldiers returning from war. Lacking the requisite concrete facts to support his explanation, Freud resolves instead to pursue a speculative path of investigation. This enquiry leads him to the hypothetical existence of an originary death drive, one at work in every organism from the beginning of life. The possible existence of this drive will allow Freud to account for what had up to then proved problematic for the psychoanalytic theory of dreams: the compulsive repetition of anxiety dreams by soldiers suffering from war neurosis.

Freud's 'démarche spéculative' (*CP*, 313) begins by taking a step beyond concrete facts. A recurring tension in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* stems from Freud's attempt at safeguarding this speculative (i.e. non-positivistic) mode of enquiry from the charge of a metaphysical flight of fantasy. In the opening paragraphs of the text, Freud claims that 'it is of no concern to us [...] to enquire how far, with this hypothesis of the pleasure principle, we have approached or adopted any particular, historically established, philosophical system'. This is because, he points out, 'we have arrived at these speculative assumptions in an attempt to describe and to account for the facts of daily observation in our field of study. Priority and originality are not among the aims that psychoanalytic work sets itself' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 7). For Derrida, the privilege Freud accords to this non-empirical yet non-metaphysical type of speculation does not come without a cost. It is the focal point of a host of theoretical difficulties which threaten the methodological coherence of his text (*CP*, 283). Freud experiences considerable difficulty, for example, in reconciling his speculative procedure with the empiricist outlook of his earlier work. He sometimes appeals, for example, to the primacy of personal experience in scientific enquiry, referring to 'my own experiences' (*Erfahrungen*)

when speaking of narcissism and childhood jealousy (*CP*, 362) (*GW*, *XIII*, 19).[107] Similarly, in his analysis of the pleasure taken in the sexual act, Freud refers to our shared experience of pleasure as a privileged source of scientific evidence: pleasure is something 'we have all experienced [*erfahren*]' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 62) (*GW*, *XIII*, 68). At the same time, Freud asserts his distance from 'what is called "intuition"' (*der sogennanten Intuition*) (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59) (*GW*, *XIII*, 64). There are scientific endeavours, he claims, where intuition does not play a large part ('je me fie peu à ce qu'on appelle l'intuition', in the translation quoted by Derrida) (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59) (*CP*, 406). Such labours call for something *beyond* immediate personal experience or intuition, something which is, in Derrida's words, 'au-delà de l'observable et du *visible*' (*CP*, 406). This beyond is what Freud calls 'speculation'.

Although the word 'Spekulation' does not appear until the fourth chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, its arrival marks a limit-point in Freud's treatment of empirical facts: 'what follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 24). Freud's uncertainty regarding the value of this speculation remains an enduring concern, however, and leads him to qualify and quarantine his own speculative reflections ('[speculation] which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilection'). For Derrida, the originality of Freud's conception of speculation lies in its incongruence with preexisting models of speculative thought, such as that found in the philosophy of Hegel. In this sense, Freud's speculative approach has more in common with usage of the word 'speculation' in everyday language. In French and German, as in English, the word 'speculation' suggests at least two distinct but interrelated meanings. The primary meaning of the word refers to a theory or conjecture which is proposed without firm evidence. It can have, and indeed most often has, negative connotations, either as fictive gossip or as something that is unnecessary and excessive (e.g., 'idle speculation'). The second meaning of 'speculation' refers to the

[107] Stratchey's version renders 'nach meinen Erfahrungen' as 'in my opinion' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 20) (*GW*, *XIII*, 19).

financial sphere, where it signifies material investment in stocks, property, or bonds, with the hope of gain but with an irreducible risk of loss or waste.

Derrida is fascinated by this double register of partial knowledge and financial wagering. The semantic associations underpinning the word 'speculation' provide him with a means of examining the notion of *excess*, which he views as crucial to understanding the wider significance of Freud's speculative enquiry. Derrida's exploration of an underlying etymological association between philosophical and financial speculation is not, however, an innovation of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'. This association is foregrounded in a much earlier text, in which it is examined in terms of the role of speculative philosophy (exemplified, as I have already noted, by Hegel) in the work of George Bataille: 'De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale: Un hegelianisme sans réserve' (*ED*, 369-407). Although the essay explores the uneasiness of Bataille's relationship to Hegelianism, its account of Hegelian speculation is useful in clarifying what Derrida views as the subversive dimension of Freud's concept of speculation.[108]

For Derrida, Hegelian idealism is the example par excellence of speculative philosophy. Through a form of thinking that goes beyond verifiable observation, Hegel aims at systematising diverse categories of human thought as they develop in relation to each other. His philosophical writings aim at constructing a coherent metaphysical system in which categories such as art, religion, and science are integrated without remainder or excess of meaning.[109] The importance of Hegel's speculative approach in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' is

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[108] Given the restricted scope of the current chapter, I have not been able to refer to *Glas* (1974), an important intertext in any discussion of Hegel and Freud in Derrida's work. For a clear account of the role of psychoanalysis in *Glas*, see Gearheart 1998. For an overview of Derrida's discussion of Hegel in *Glas*, see Hobson 1998: 155-64.

[109] Derrida notes that in opposition to Hegel, Bataille defines 'excès' as that which remains, in principle, outside speculative reasoning (*ED*, 376). Derrida's unease regarding Hegel's systematicity is evident in his observation, during a discussion of the absence of laughter from the Hegelian system (laughter signifying a kind of critical self-reflexivity), that: 'ce qui est risible, c'est la *soumission* à l'évidence du sens, à la force de cet impératif: qu'il y ait du sens, que rien ne soit définitivement perdu par la mort, que celle-ci reçoive la signification encore de "négativité abstraite" [...]. Cette soumission est l'essence et l'élément [...] de l'onto-logique hegelienne' (*ED*, 377).

clear from the numerous references to Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* ('sublation') scattered throughout Derrida's essay.[110] For Hegel, *Aufhebung*—'le concept spéculatif par excellence' (*ED*, 377)—refers to the assimilation of opposing interpretations of a particular phenomenon into a more comprehensive synthetic unity, thus assuring that the contrary of an interpretation is always productively 'put to work' without remainder (or waste) in a higher or more advanced conceptual form.

This dialectical method is essential to Hegel's speculative thought, which he presents, in his 'Preface' to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as being opposed to 'reflective' thinking. Whereas the fruits of reflection are the 'products of lifeless understanding and external cognition', speculative thinking seeks the unifying principle of absolute Spirit at work within the object itself. According to Hegel, the 'speculative moment'[111] apprehends 'the unity of the determinations in their opposition—the affirmative that is contained in their dissolution and transition'.[112] In simpler terms, all knowledge of the absolute (which Hegel equates with the totalised Whole) proceeds according to a sequence of preservation and abolition. To take the most celebrated example from his *Logic*: 'being' contains its contrary 'nothingness' because in pure indeterminate being there would be nothing to intuit, just as the idea of 'nothing' contains an irreducible trace of 'being'. Having established that both categories are self-contradictory, Hegel puts this 'determinate negation' to work by attaining a 'positive' outcome, one which avoids self-contradiction by transforming the meaning of each term but which also preserves their former meaning. The apparently opposing categories of 'being' and

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[110] See in particular Derrida's observation that he is reading Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung* in mind (*CP*, 421).

[111] According to Michael Inwood, Hegel tries on several occasions to link his notion of speculation with expressions such as 'matrimonial speculation' and 'commercial speculation'. Nevertheless, Inwood concludes that '[Hegel's concept of speculation] has little to do with such usages, but is derived from the Latin "*speculari*"—to spy out, observe or explore. [...] There is, in Hegel's use of the word, no suggestion of risk or uncertainty' (Inwood 2002: 550, n. 94). The confidence with which Inwood sifts the unwanted resonances from Hegel's use of the term 'speculation' represents a significant point of disagreement with Derrida's reading, in which the word's 'commercial' sense is critical to understanding the wider role of speculation in Hegel.

[112] Hegel 1975: § 51; 79-82.

'nothingness' are now subsumed by a higher concept, 'becoming', in which what becomes can be said to have being but which, in its becoming, is nothing.[113] Crucially, the concept of 'becoming' then becomes the foundation for a new dialectical process, in which it will again be sublated ('aufgehoben') in a process which proceeds ever closer towards the manifestation of the absolute as Spirit.

According to Derrida, Hegelian speculation is characterised by a commitment to total austerity. This is because Hegel's speculative thinking appropriates everything for its own profit: its expenditure or investment is always rewarded. This is contrary both to Freud's thinking of speculation as characterised by uncertainty, doubt, and a spirit of self-criticism (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59) and Bataille's concern for what the speculator can never appropriate: excess. Defined as that which resists appropriation by the conceptual system, excess has no place in Hegel's speculative philosophy. Just as nothing is wasted in Hegel's model, conceptual profit is gained from every speculative act. For Derrida, *Aufhebung* 'est risible en ce qu'elle signifie *l'affairement* d'un discours s'essoufflant à se réapproprier toute négativité, à élaborer la mise en jeu en *investissement*, à *amortir* la dépense absolue' (*ED*, 377-8). Although Derrida does not make this link explicit in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Hegel's notion of speculation recalls in several respects Husserl's treatment of science as an Infinite Task of reason. The genetic phenomenology which Husserl presents in the *Crisis of the European Sciences*—which, we saw, aims to return to the original sense perceptions that gave rise to the ideal objectivities of science or mathematics—is founded on a single axiom: that it is *always* possible to return to these original perceptions. In a famous simile, Husserl likens scientific progress to a researcher building on the foundations of a secure house, foundations which can always in

[113] Hegel 1976: 106.

principle be returned to if needed (*IOG*, 109).[114] For Husserl, as for Hegel, knowledge always proceeds in the direction of the absolute: upwards.

For Derrida, the significance of Freud's speculative procedure in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* lies in its complication of Husserl's and Hegel's description of scientific progress as essentially and ideally teleological. In making use of a speculative procedure, Freud inscribes uncertainty and the risk of no 'return' at every step of his enquiry. Derrida reads this type of speculation as decidedly un-Hegelian, since Freud is seen to begin speculating 'en pariant sur une valeur à produire comme à partir de rien' (*CP*, 410). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, every speculative investment is conceived as irreducibly risky, as a wager (*gage*), because it is always structurally possible that Freud's investment will have been made in vain. What is striking in Freud's attitude towards speculation is that it exhibits little anxiety faced with the inevitability of this risk. In fact, Freud frequently associates his speculative approach with theoretical audacity, one which does not lack the resolve to take a leap into the unknown: 'let us make a bold attempt at another step forward' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 50). The translation cited by Derrida fittingly emphasises the difficulty of the step beyond: 'ayons le *courage* de faire un pas de plus' (*CP,* 286, my emphasis).

Derrida argues that Freud's 'démarche' is more properly described as a 'dé-marche' (*CP*, 367). Although Freud insists on the rhetorical trope of the step beyond (a locution he uses ten times in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), he frequently invokes such a step only to withdraw it in advance ('le retirer d'avance') (*CP*, 356). For Derrida, this strange 'pas sans pas' is crucial to understanding *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*'s 'singulier chemin de la spéculation' (*CP*, 287). In his search for a beyond of the pleasure principle, Freud repeatedly proposes a hypothesis based on limited evidence, before quickly withdrawing it

[114] In the next paragraph Husserl has recourse to a metaphor which compares the work of 'descriptive science' to an investment without risk: 'every new proposition can by itself be "cashed in" for self-evidence' (*CEM*, 363). Derrida's French translation sheds this financial nuance.

and vowing to go 'one step further' in the production of a hypothesis that will be even more immune to reservation, even more daring in the speculative theory it advances. In this sense, Freud might be said to repeat the well-worn Hegelian triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, rejecting hypothesis after hypothesis, sublating each in turn into a stronger and more comprehensive synthesis. What is singular about Freud's speculative enquiry, however, is that even at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, when Freud has arrived at his destination, the hypothesis of a duality of drives, his critical reflexivity remains vigilant. Freud is here insistent on calling into question the conclusions of his own speculative approach: 'the degree of uncertainty is not assignable,' he concedes, 'one may have made a lucky hit or gone shamefully astray' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59). If one has gone shamefully astray, there has been an excess of speculation, one which cannot be re-assimilated into a previous sequence of hypotheses. A step backwards and a re-orientation of the *démarche* will thus be necessary.

It is precisely this halting, or limping, view of scientific progress that interests Derrida. On the one hand, Freudian speculation undermines the authority of Husserl's living present as the source, foundation, and standard by which all scientific knowledge is measured. Freud sometimes rejects, we saw, the security of intuition and personal experience in order to 'throw [himself] into a line of thought and to follow it wherever it leads out of scientific curiosity' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59). On the other hand, his brand of speculation cannot be subsumed within the structure of Hegelian speculative thinking. Although the latter goes 'beyond' the living present (as evident in Hegel's rejection of reflection in favour of speculative reasoning), it does so only in order to turn back on itself towards a more originary and all-embracing closure. The singularity of Freud's speculative path, Derrida argues, 'ne se construit pas lui-même comme la méthode de la spéculation hegelienne [...]; il ne revient pas sur lui-même, il n'a ni la forme du cercle dialectique, ni celle du cercle herméneutique' (*CP*, 287). Derrida is fascinated by the openness of Freud's speculative procedure in *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle: 'we must be ready, too, to abandon a path that we have followed for a time if it seems to be leading to no good end' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 64). This 'no good end' is what distinguishes the latter's conception of 'speculation' from the Hegelian and Husserlian scientific speculator who 'always wins'; for Freud, it is always possible that the speculative investment will have been in vain.

ii. Science Fictions

In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida emphasises how Freud's movement away from empirical experience as the foundation of scientific enquiry produces a striking defence mechanism regarding the status of this methodological procedure. This defence mechanism involves a denial ('dénégation') of a debt to metaphysics, a mode of enquiry to which Freud's speculative procedure might seem close. This anxiety is legible, we saw, in Freud's remark that 'it is no concern to us [...] to enquire how far, with this hypothesis of the pleasure principle, we have approached or adopted any particular, historically established, philosophical system' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 7). According to Derrida's analysis of this 'mouvement saisissant de dénégation' (*CP*, 280), Freud's speculative leap beyond experience overflows the spatialising logic of the 'position' or the 'Setzung' in general (*CP*, 278); it is this overflowing of the boundary between science and philosophy that gives rise Freud's insistence on the 'op-position' of psychoanalytic and metaphysical modes of enquiry. While I will return to issues of denial and indebtedness in Chapter 3, here I would like to focus on another form of 'logique positionelle' at stake in Freud's text: the opposition between science and fiction.[115]

For Derrida, the problems inherent in reinforcing the opposition between objective scientific description and fictional narrative converge in the most famous scene of *Beyond the*

[115] For an account of Freud's anxiety of influence with respect to metaphysics, notably in relation to the nebulous influence of Nietzsche on psychoanalysis, see Weber 1984.

Pleasure Principle: Freud's description of a child playing with a spool—the famous game of '*fort-da*' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14-16). Freud introduces the topic of child's play in the book's second chapter in order to come to terms with a puzzling contradiction in psychoanalytic theory: the conflict between the mastery of the pleasure principle in psychical life (the individual is before all else a pleasure-seeking entity) and the presence of a compulsion that causes patients to repeat unpleasurable experiences in dreams and waking life. With the aim of resolving this contradiction, Freud determines to modify his theory of the pleasure principle, to go 'beyond' the pleasure principle towards a more authoritative psychical agency, whether the compulsion to repeat or, as he hypothesises later in the text, an originary drive towards death.

After considering the unpleasurable repetition of anxiety dreams by soldiers returning from war (*SE*, *XVIII*, 13), Freud turns to what he calls a 'normal' case: the play of a child. For Derrida, ironically, it is at this point in the text that the difficulties surrounding Freud's speculative procedure intensify. This is because Freud's discussion of the *fort-da* game raises questions not only of scientific description and objectivity, but something which Derrida claims is inextricable from the latter categories: the question of autobiographical narrative.

Freud tells us that he has recently had the good fortune to observe the play of a child over an extended period of time, having occupied the same home as the child and his parents for several weeks (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14). Since this was much more than a 'fleeting observation', Freud claims that he was able to discover the meaning of a game that was constantly repeated by the child. After a short description of the child's impeccable behaviour and unremarkable character, Freud describes this game in detail. It consisted in the infant throwing certain objects (principally toys) into places where they were difficult to access ('into a corner, under the bed, and so on') and in doing so uttering a cry of 'o-o-o-o'. Freud and the child's mother interpret this string of syllables as an attempt at articulating the word 'fort', the German word for 'gone' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14-15). Freud goes on to report that he witnessed two variants of the

game, one involving the child's own image in a mirror, and one involving a spool, a small block of wood tied to a piece of string. It is the latter version of the game which commands the greater part of Freud's and Derrida's attention.[116] According to Freud, the spool version of the game consisted in the child throwing the spool into his curtained cot so that it disappeared from sight. The child then pulled the spool out of the cot again, hailing its reappearance with a joyful 'da' ('there') (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15) (*GW*, *XIII*, 12).

Freud claims that the meaning of the game becomes clear when explained in terms of an economic theory of psychical compensation (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15). According to this theory, the child's good behaviour (he does not cry or shout when his mother is absent) is a direct result of his compulsive repetition of the game. Playing *fort-da* with the spool provides the child with compensation for the instinctual renunciation required each time the child's mother is absent. In order to compensate for the effects of this absence, the child plays at renunciation (*fort*) and satisfaction (*da*). By manipulating the mother's symbolic representation (the piece of wood), he can control and master her coming and going at will. The repetition of this game, Freud reasons, is what prepares the child for the later death of the mother, which he endured with almost total indifference (*SE*, *XVIII*, 16, n.1).

For Derrida, the significance of Freud's interpretation of the game lies in the difficulty of assigning his description to one generic category. Since it is plainly not a tale, a story, a myth, or a fiction (*CP*, 319), Derrida settles on a suitably flexible term: 'argument'.[117] Freud's emphasis on his experience of the game as one of objective, empirical observation means that his description is confronted with two methodological problems. On the one hand, Derrida argues that Freud's insistence on the completeness ('complétude') of his description is undermined both by evidence furnished in the text and by the general process of spacing. On

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[116] In the current chapter, I am interested in Freud's discussion of the game only from the point of view of the scientific issues it raises; a fuller account of the importance of the game for Derrida will be given in Chapter 4 (4.iii.1).

[117] 'Lui donner un titre, c'est accréditer déjà le dépôt ou la consignation' (*CP*, 319).

the other hand, he shows how Freud's supposed disinterestedness as a scientific observer is ultimately irreconcilable with a number autobiographical traces inscribed in the text. In tracing these difficulties throughout *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Derrida problematises not only the scientific assurances on which Freud insists in the text but also the very possibility of attaining values such as 'completeness' and 'objectivity' in any act of scientific enquiry. In doing so, it must noted, Derrida never denies these values their regulatory status, that is, their necessity as *archē* (disinterestedness) and *telos* (completeness) of scientific activity. Rather, his aim is to highlight the dangers associated with any assertion of interpretative closure, of the total objectivity and completeness of a description.

1. Completeness

Derrida is interested in Freud's insistence on the completeness of his description of the child's game, despite lingering evidence that this description is in fact 'fragmentaire, sans conclusion, sélectif dans ce que ça donne à lire' (*CP*, 319). Freud is not entirely unaware of the fragmentary character of his description. He begins by recognising his own role in discriminating between phenomena experienced, claiming to take note only of those characteristics which are relevant to his economic (i.e., compensatory) theory of children's play (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14). Despite this admission of the lacunary character of his description, Freud appears to see no contradiction in asserting the completeness of his description of the game. After his description of the two acts of the game—the throwing-away (*fort*) and the pulling-back (*da*) of the spool—Freud announces that this was the 'komplette Spiel', the 'whole game' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15) (*GW*, *XIII*, 12). As Derrida points out, however, Freud's insistence on the game's completeness implies in turn that Freud has furnished us with an observation that is also complete and by implication with a complete interpretation of the game itself. Indeed,

Freud presents his description as comprehensive and total, without excess of observable content. Freud assumes that the context of the game is both 'saturable' and 'saturé' (*CP*, 334), Derrida claims, alluding to two key terms in an earlier essay on textual interpretation and the possibility of a 'closed' (that is, complete and saturated) context.[118]

Derrida's aim here is not to undermine Freud's confidence in the game's completeness by drawing attention to elements that have been sifted from his description. Instead, he wants to show how any such completeness is undermined from the very beginning by the movement of spacing. Two types of incompleteness can be identified in Freud's description. The first type of incompleteness is calculable (and thus contingent) while the second type is incalculable (and therefore necessary). A contingent incompleteness in description would be the type of incompleteness which one could, given the appropriate conditions and resources, eliminate from the scientific description of an object. This type of incompleteness is by nature determinable, calculable, and foreseeable. It is the type of incompleteness Freud refers to when he compares the gaps in our scientific knowledge to algebraic signs which stand in for research not yet undertaken (*SE*, *XVIII*, 57). Indeed, scientific (and more broadly speaking academic) discourse thrives on this type of incompleteness. If we apply this notion of calculable incompleteness to Freud's description of the *fort-da* game, we might ask, for instance, why the child's game of symbolic substitution persists. If Freud does not describe a proper end to the game (in the double sense of *telos* as aim but also completion), how do we know that the description of the game is complete? It may be that Freud has simply omitted the game's 'final act', a scene which would bring the game to a close and thus complete Freud's initial, incomplete account of the game.

The difficulty here, however, is that there is no way of determining whether a supplemental observation will complete the original description. This is because, while it is

[118] See 'Signature, événement, contexte' (*MP*, 367-93).

always possible to speculate (that is, to wager) on what new evidence may one day become available, it is structurally impossible for future evidence to be foreseen or predicted in its entirety. Every context and every description of a context, Derrida argues, is always already punctured by an unconditional, structural openness. This openness stems from the deferral of closure entailed by the spacing of *différance*. In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida describes this incalculable incompleteness as an 'axiom' inscribed in advance in every act of inscription (*CP*, 334). Although he does not elaborate on these 'généralités' (*CP*, 334) in the text of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', given his allusive use of terms taken from his essay on 'Signature, événement, contexte' ('saturable' and 'saturé'), we can surmise that it is the issue of saturatability of context that he has in mind when highlighting the 'conditions formelles' (*CP*, 344) of the incompleteness of Freud's description. This incompleteness is not something that can be removed through supplementary description but is inscribed in advance by spacing as temporisation. The spacing of *différance* ensures that the presence of meaning is only possible as an effect of the difference between a past retention (*archē*) and a future protention (*telos*). Since both the former and the latter are in a continual state of transformation, the punctual moment of meaningful self-presence never arrives; completeness or contextual closure is instead endlessly deferred. In 'La différance' (1968), Derrida describes this open-ended structure as a feature of every textual structure. Every element in a signifying chain, he argues,

> se rapporte à autre chose que lui-même, gardant en lui la marque de l'élément passé et se laissant déjà creuser par la marque de son rapport à l'élément futur, la trace ne se rapportant pas moins à ce qu'on appelle le futur qu'à ce qu'on appelle le passé, et constituant ce qu'on appelle le présent par ce rapport même à ce qui n'est pas lui: absolument pas lui, c'est-à-dire pas même un passé ou un futur comme présents modifiés (*MP*, 13).

It is because the meaning of a textual trace is always deferred that the text itself calls for interminable reinterpretation. The meaning of a text such as Freud's description of the game is

always vulnerable to reevaluation in the context of an unforeseeable event or discovery. It is always structurally possible that Freud's archives will one day throw up a hitherto unknown document that will radically unsettle all previous interpretations of the *fort-da* game.

2. Objectivity

Related to the problem of the completeness or incompleteness of scientific description is the second methodological difficulty encountered by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This difficulty relates to the problem Freud experiences in reconciling his inscription of the text's 'I'—ostensibly, the scientist who speculates—with dissonant voices which Derrida argues are irreducibly operative in Freud's text, in particular Freud's autobiographical 'I'. Returning to the description of the *fort-da* scene, Derrida focusses on Freud's assertion of his own status as an objective observer of the child's game. Freud insists, we saw, on the child's 'normalité originaire' (*CP*, 328). Abandoning his analysis of war neurosis at the beginning of the book's second chapter, Freud proposes instead to start from what he calls a 'normal' case (*SE*, *XVIII*, 13): the example of an unremarkable child engaged in one of its most habitual activities, play.

In order to interrogate Freud's apparent disinterestedness as a scientific observer, Derrida alights on a remark made by Freud just before his 'complete' description of the *fort-da* game. This remark represents an autobiographical 'morceau' (*CP*, 319) in a description which otherwise appears to be entirely objective. Regarding the child's game of *fort-da*, Freud writes: 'it was more than a mere fleeting observation, for I lived under the same roof as the child for some months, and it was some time before I discovered the meaning of the puzzling activity which he constantly repeated' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14). We know from Freud's letters, from which Derrida quotes extensively (*CP*, 341-57), that this 'roof' was the house of Freud's

daughter Sophie and her husband Max Halberstadt. The child observed was not any 'ordinary' or 'unremarkable' boy but Freud's grandson, Ernst. Even if it were possible for Freud to separate his personal experience (e.g., his being on holidays) from the experience of the observation itself, the conditions in which the observation took place are fundamentally incompatible with those of an ideal controlled observation: 'le spéculateur n'était pas en situation d'observer' (*CP*, 320). The scene of the *fort-da* game, which takes place in the personal space of a family's summer residence, undermines Freud's attempt at inscribing his observation within a purely scientific *topos*. While Freud's observation conforms in some respects to empirical norms (proximity to the object, the age of the child, the period of observation, etc.), in others respects it responds to the requirements of a self-narrative (or 'conte'), involving a number of irreducible autobiographical or fictive elements (*CP*, 320).

As in his analysis of the completeness of Freud's description of the game, Derrida points out that the latter's insistence on his objectivity as observer ought to arouse our suspicion. In the course of his description of the 'scène' of the child's game, Freud makes one remark that is of particular interest to Derrida. 'One day,' Freud writes, 'I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15). According to Derrida, this strange observation introduces a series of difficulties in the generic categorisation of Freud's claims. Where is this statement to be inscribed? It cannot be reduced to the specificity of the scientific description of an object because it constitutes what philosophers of science call a 'counterfactual conditional', a statement concerning scientific laws made in the subjunctive or conditional rather than the normal indicative.[119] In the form of a counterfactual conditional, Freud's argument can be rewritten as follows: *if Ernst had played with his spool like a train, then he*

[119] Rosenburg 2011: 34-5

would have been normal. Not only does this statement contradict Freud's earlier insistence on the child's normality but it cannot be said to belong to the objective description of the game because its grammatical form is resistant to the values of spatial and temporal presence on which 'scientific' observation depends. Indeed, Freud's conditional observation has more in common with the category of the fictive, that is, with science fiction or speculative fiction, than it does with the requirements of objective scientific description.

For Derrida, Freud's observation highlights the uncontrollable autobiographical excess inscribed in every trace. This autobiographical element is conventionally seen as incompatible with the ambitions of scientific objectivity. As Derrida points out, however, even if the observation itself is not intentionally 'autobiographical', it can still be interpreted according to the rules of autobiography as a genre. Derrida's examination of Freud's letters reveals a childhood fear of trains, a phobia which can be seen to 'return' in his description of Ernst's game: 'c'est comme si l'on pouvait parier [...] que le spéculateur (dont le goût inversé, disons la phobie pour le chemin de fer, *Eisenbahn*, est assez connu pour nous mettre sur la voie) aurait joué, lui, au petit train avec ces "petits objets"' (*CP*, 335). These autobiographical traces, Derrida argues, can be folded back on Freud's observation of the child's abnormal use of the spool (*CP*, 360). What this structural 'repliement' of Freud's own concepts on his text shows is that Freud's apparently objective description is not as indifferent or disinterested as it claims to be.

Derrida makes a short but crucial aside regarding this problematic objectivity. He points out that we must not interpret the specular folding back of Freud's concepts on his text as a criticism, in accusing Freud, for example, of failing to uphold a particular standard of objectivity or critical reflection. On the contrary, Derrida claims, 'la question de l'objectivité n'a pas la moindre pertinence' (*CP*, 320). Although this claim may at first seem contradictory, it is in fact entirely consistent with Derrida's treatment of the scientific credentials of Freud's

text. 'Objectivity' in itself has no relevance for Derrida's analysis because the ideal of objectivity belongs to that category of concepts Derrida calls 'quasi-transcendental'. Objectivity is quasi-transcendental because there is no originary or authentic objectivity that *precedes* so-called objective enquiry and thus forms a standard against which the latter could then be evaluated. As we saw in our reading of temporality in 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' in the previous chapter, for Derrida it is only through the secondary, or the *après coup*, that the 'original' is constituted as original. Here again, in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', it is only through the belatedness of supposedly 'objective' description that scientific objectivity can take on any meaningful status. Derrida argues that there is no transcendental origin of objectivity that precedes (*archē*) and guides (*telos*) Freud's enquiries. Instead, the (primary) *archē* and the (secondary) *telos* of Freud's procedure are caught up in a kind of methodological circle, neither of which can be said to be 'constituted' prior to or following the constitution of the other. This is why, regarding the question of the relationship between Freud's speculative and non-speculative procedure in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Derrida reasons that it would be impossible to submit Freud's 'expérience et son compte rendu [...] au tribunal dont ils répètent l'institution' (*CP*, 320). How can Freud's descriptive act be judged against a standard (an ideal, *eidos*, or *telos*) of objectivity when it is the very inscription of this act that simultaneously establishes the possibility and impossibility of objectivity itself? There is no ideal (*telos*) of objectivity outside of originary acts (*archē*) which both found and fall short of it. This cross-contamination of the *archē* and *telos* is the central paradox of Derrida's concept of the quasi-transcendental, a paradox on which he insists, at least in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', all scientific endeavour is founded.[120]

[120] For a more detailed analysis of the role of the quasi-transcendental in Derrida's work (a term first used by Rodolphe Gasché and adopted by Derrida from *Glas* onwards), see Bennington and Derrida 2008: 223-36 and Bennington 2000: 76-92.

It is because of the quasi-transcendental character of objectivity that Derrida claims that the scene of observation of the child's game is both an empirical experiment ('expérience') and a singular tale ('conte') (*CP*, 320). It is a fictive tale not only because of the subjective narrative which Freud inevitably imposes on the scene, but also because Freud's description of the scene inscribes fictiveness at its outset, through the twin values of 'completeness' and 'objectivity'. These are the theoretical fictions or quasi-transcendental origins on which the scientific specificity of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* depends; and although they are exposed by Derrida as fictive, they remain absolutely necessary to speculative thinking in all its forms, whether scientific, philosophical, or literary.

iii. *Speculative Fictions*

At several key points in the text of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida invokes the figure of the 'devil's advocate'. In this final section, I will show how this trope is linked to two of the major themes addressed thus far in this chapter: the relationship between speculation and the metaphysics of presence and the 'opposition' between science and fiction. The figures of the 'diabolique' and the 'démoniaque' are frequently evoked in Derrida's work, notably in those texts which deal explicitly with psychoanalytic themes: 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' (1980), *Mal d'archive* (1995), and *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (1996). Underlying each of these references is a value which threatens the coherence of the metaphysics of presence and its relationship to thought. The trope of the diabolic is always associated in Derrida's work with a conception of thinking as an activity that is inextricably bound up with the 'non-present', with what goes beyond the foundation of Husserl's intuitive living present. Indeed, Derrida is attracted not only to the fictiveness of the trope of the diabolic but also to its rhetorical usage. He often refers to fictional, teleological 'forms' such as objectivity and completeness in terms

of the Greek goddess *Anánkē* (*CP*, 386), Necessity or 'Nécessite même' (*MA*, 125).[121] In what follows I will try to demonstrate why Derrida places such emphasis on this necessity of the fictive.

Like Derrida, Freud also has recourse to the figure of the devil's advocate in a number of his texts. In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida argues that Freud's most significant reference to the *advocatus diaboli* is made at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Avoiding the question of whether he will 'follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher' Plato in his treatment of desire, Freud breaks off his analysis and advances 'a few words of critical reflection' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59). He admits two things: first, that he does not know whether he is himself convinced of his own hypotheses regarding the 'beyond' of the pleasure principle (the death drive) and second, that he does not seek to convince others of the truth of these speculations. The problematic relationship between science and fiction in Freud's speculative method is clear from his insistence that

> 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. [...] It is impossible to pursue an idea of this kind [i.e. an idea concerning the regressive theory of the drives] except by repeatedly combining factual material with what is purely speculative and thus diverging widely from empirical observation (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59).

Noteworthy here is Freud's representation of his own speculative procedure. Like every method, it is subject to its own rules and strictures. These rules, however, diverge considerably from the empirical method emphasised by Freud in his earlier work, in which enquiry is chiefly oriented by personal experience or the sense perceptions of the present moment (for example, in Freud's preference for the living speech of the analytic situation

[121] In *Mal d'archive*, for example, Derrida refers to Freudian speculation as 'un autre nom pour *Anánkē*' (*MA*, 25).

over and above those analyses which are conducted solely on the basis of written texts).[122] When both the living experience of dealing with a patient in the analytic situation and the written traces of a patient's experience are absent, Freud claims that speculation can and ought to intervene. In such a case, we are fully authorised 'to throw [ourselves] into a line of thought and to follow it wherever it leads' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59).

The most striking feature of the above citation is the figure it uses to describe this act of speculation: the devil's advocate. For Derrida, to play the devil's advocate is to play a fictive role. Indeed, this role is more fictional than the type of writing that is habitually called 'fictional' because it designates a movement that is itself anterior to literary fiction: fictive representation within the imagination. Sartre famously describes the imagination as the freedom to imagine what is not the case, 'la possibilité de poser une thèse d'irréalité'.[123] Similarly, in Derrida's account of the diabolic, scientific or theoretical freedom consists in a capacity to go beyond what is present, as real, in the present moment. The fictional is in this sense what is not present in primary perception; it is that which is not intuitively 'given' in the present moment. In the terms of Derrida's reading of Husserl, it is the transcendental (or more properly speaking, quasi-transcendental) 'fiction' of an impossible, ideal circle which can never be empirically found in nature. This ideal fiction allows Husserl's first geometer to recognise 'roundness' in the natural world. In this way, fiction is the necessary supplement that gives the non-fictional (the given) its meaningful self-identity.[124]

As we saw in the Introduction to this thesis (iii), Derrida argues that a fiction or a myth always involves the imposition of an origin. This is why, towards the end of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', he remarks, in one of the text's most succinct formulations, that 'l'origine est une

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[122] See, for instance, Freud's reservations regarding the interpretation of the written testimony of the Schreber case (*SE*, *XII*, 36-7).

[123] Sartre 1940: 231-2.

[124] In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it is the 'theoretical fiction' (*SE*, *V*, 265) of the opposition between the primary (unconscious) process and the secondary (inhibitive) process which forms the basis of Freud's dream hermeneutic and ultimately the basis of psychoanalytical therapy in general.

spéculation' (*CP*, 395). In other words, the origin (objectivity, completeness, the distinction between the primary and secondary processes, etc.) is always fictive. Despite this fictiveness, however, the origin retains a necessary and irreducible value. The theoretical difficulties encountered by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* stem primarily from this search for a fictional origin: in this case, the origin of pleasure. In ordinary or 'courant' language (*CP*, 424), Derrida points out, we think we know what we mean when we speak of 'pleasure'. But beneath the veneer of this 'consensus implicite et précompréhensif', there is an underlying layer of complexity and confusion (*CP*, 425). What is crucial here is that there is a certain necessity for Derrida in not thinking about the deeper complexity behind our everyday use of language. The origin of pleasure may be a fictive 'présupposition' but it remains a necessary one, for one cannot proceed speculatively or non-speculatively, relying to a greater or lesser degree on evidence furnished by the living present, without some element of fiction (or, to use a key term employed throughout *La Carte postale*: without some idea of an *adresse*).

Derrida's aim in highlighting this irreducible fictive element in both scientific and non-scientific speculation is to complicate the apparently rigorous border between science and fiction. In this sense, the deconstructive reading Derrida proposes in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' has much in common with his later *Foi et savoi* (1998), a text in which, in order to question the absolute distinction between knowledge and faith, Derrida uncovers a root common to both: a quasi-transcendental act of 'faith' in the other, whether in the inter-subjective constitution of scientific truths or in our communication with a divine alterity. In a similar way, in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' Derrida's deconstruction of the opposition between science and fiction consists in the revelation of 'valeurs plus ou moins fictives, au sens enfin de ce qui déborde la présence (donnée) du présent, le donné du don' (*CP*, 304).

The rhetorical trope of the 'devil's advocate' is at the core of this deconstruction. The trope is important for Derrida for two reasons. The first relates to the relationship between

Freud's diabolic speculation and Hegel's account of speculative thinking. Derrida notes that the diabolic is inscribed in the very structure of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

> la démarche même du texte est diabolique. Il mime la marche, ne cesse de marcher sans avancer, esquisse régulièrement un pas de plus sans gagner un pouce de terrain. Diable boiteux, comme tout ce qui transgresse le principe de plaisir sans jamais laisser conclure au franchissement (*CP*, 287-8).[125]

In contradistinction to Hegelian speculation, Freud plays devil's advocate with scientific evidence, abandoning it at the beginning of Chapter IV ('What follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation') in order to throw himself into a line of enquiry which may in the end lead nowhere. Its negativity will not be able to be reabsorbed or sublated into a 'higher' speculative structure. Freud thus sketches a theory of a duality of drives which has only a tacit relation to concrete scientific facts and intuitive evidence. He advances, Derrida tells us, 'sans gagner un pouce de terrain' (*CP*, 287), again unlike Hegel's speculator who cannot afford to 'lose' and therefore always gains from his investment. For Freud, it is always possible that investment in a theoretical fiction may ultimately prove fruitless: 'we must be ready, too, to abandon a path that we have followed for a time, if it seems to be leading to no good end' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 64).[126]

The second reason why Derrida is interested in the trope relates to the relationship between Freud and the devil's advocate he conjures. Derrida argues that the devil returns in the text of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in a way that is reducible neither to a straightforward 'représentation imaginaire' (that is, as an wholly fictional construct) nor to that of an 'apparition en personne' (that is, as the presence-to-self of the object in a moment of living presence, the basis on which, for Husserl at least, scientific knowledge is founded) (*CP*, 288). On the contrary, for Derrida the figure of the devil in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 'défie une telle distinction ou une telle opposition'. The difficulty of the question of the

[125] As Marian Hobson has pointed out, tradition has it that the devil limps (1998: 170).

[126] Derrida describes this fictional teleology as 'télé—sans telos. Finalité sans fin. La beauté du diable' (*CP,* 363).

diabolic in Freud's text is linked to this category of the 'in person'. What *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* teaches us, according to Derrida, is no longer to believe in the opposition between an originarily given and thus present 'I' (the 'en personne') and the devil's advocate into whose care, during moments of speculative sweep, Freud occasionally entrusts us. This 'in person' is the scientific speculator whom Freud wants the reader to hear above the multiplicity of voices at work in the text of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud creates the illusion of an authoritative, objective 'I' by speaking directly to the reader, as though the reader were present at the precise moment of his original observation; in doing so, he urges the reader to step with him and thus into line with him: 'let us therefore go a step further' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 29), 'let us picture a living organism' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 26). This 'in person'-effect is inscribed in the rhetoric of Freud's text. The devil's advocate whom Freud summons to do his speculative dirty work thus functions as the 'masque', 'simulacre', or 'double' of this personal presence (*CP*, 288). For Derrida, Freud goes to every effort in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to reinforce this opposition between the objective scientist and the advocate-speculator, to appease the 'inquiétude' both of the reader and of the 'I' who signs itself in the text (*CP*, 288).[127]

The plurality of voices at work in Freud's text results from a movement which Derrida calls 'auto-affection', the process which both enables and undermines the subject's presence to itself. Although I will return to the theme of autoaffection in greater detail in Chapter 4 (i. 2), I would like to emphasise here that in the autoaffective structure of Freud's text, there is no 'authentic' scientist-speculator who speaks alone or first, just as Freud's 'devil's advocate' is not simply the secondary and fictive derivative of Freud's original, authentic self. This is because, according to Derrida, the process of autoaffection entails that the *presentation* of the

[127] A similar reference to the figure of the devil's advocate occurs in '"Etre juste avec Freud": L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse' (*R*, 89-146), where it is a question of relating the speculative power of Freud's *advocatus diaboli* to 'cette fiction cartésienne du Malin Génie' (*R*, 108).

inner self (the 'in person', the subject, or the present) can only be constituted through exterior re-presentation (the 'fictive', the non-present) (*VP*, 58). This structure of autoaffection explains the proliferation of roles and the multitude of voices at work in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. What attracts Derrida to the figure of the devil's advocate, above these other roles, is that this self-representation is itself consciously fictive and its use by Freud marks the point at which he seems most aware of the logic of autoaffection as the constitutive (and de-constitutive) structure of subjectivity. At a decisive point in the itinerary of his text (the moment which calls for 'critical self-reflection'), Freud seems to recognise the plurality of his own voice in the text: '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 myself believe in them*' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 59, my emphasis). This fragmented self, adopting the roles of scientist, speculator, grandfather, etc., is wholly unlike the faceless first geometer of Husserl's 'The Origin of Geometry', on whose objectivity, ordinariness, and self-presence phenomenology and thus all scientific discourse depend.

According to Derrida, then, no scientific discourse can fully eradicate the fictive effects that are interior to it and necessary to its progress. Scientific research can advance only by imposing fictions of its own origin or *archē* (the value of pleasure, for instance, over which Freud places an algebraic 'X': *SE*, *XVIII*, 57) and fictions of its own *telos* (completeness, objectivity, or any other quasi-transcendental ideal). For Derrida, as we have seen, the specificity and value of Freud's concept of speculation is that it implies at least partial awareness both of the fictiveness that is internal to it and of the necessity of inscribing this fictiveness at its origin.

3

Mal d'archive
From Debt to Inheritance

In June 2008, Christie's auction house placed a remarkable collection of books under the hammer. The lot, given the catalogue title 'Important Scientific Books', was the fruit of four decades of archival zeal by the physician and amateur astronomer Richard Green. Intended for sale to a single buyer and expected to raise in excess of $6 million, the collection spanned 'six revolutionary centuries of scientific, mathematical and philosophical thought' and included rare early editions of works by Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton.[128] Among the luminaries assembled, only two represented the epoch-making discoveries of the twentieth century. The first was Sigmund Freud, whose *Interpretation of Dreams* was represented in a time-beaten first edition valued at $8,000. The second was Albert Einstein, whose contribution to physics was represented by a series of 130 offprints, many containing handwritten emendations, marginal comments, and several instances of the scientist's autograph. These personal traces were expected to bolster the Einstein lot, bringing its estimated value into the regions of $250,000.

The tenacity with which such first editions are sought out is often commented upon but rarely examined in detail. While Derrida's work is not often brought to bear on the mysteries of the auction house, the conclusions he reaches in *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* (1995) go some way towards explaining man's feverish desire for the *édition originale.* On the one hand, the desire for the first edition is symptomatic of a more general desire for presence, what Derrida calls in *Mal d'archive* 'un désir irrépressible de retour à l'origine, un mal de pays, une nostalgie' (*MA*, 142).[129] The bidder desires to return to the

[128] Park 2008.

[129] For Derrida, the desire for presence is indistinguishable from desire in general because desire is always predicated on the absence or presence of the desired object (*CP*, 382).

origin of the work, to the milieu and mind in which it was first shaped. So much more valuable, then, is a document marked by the physical traces of its author (notes, comments, signatures), by the material impression of a now vanished presence. For Derrida, such desire aims at an impossible moment of presence in which 'l'archive imprimée ne s'est pas encore détachée de l'impression première dans son origine singulière, irreproductible et archaïque' (*MA*, 150). As we have seen, any such desire begins by repressing the movement of spacing, the inexorable piling-up of new meanings and contexts which trouble our interpretation of the traces of the past. The stronger this repression of spacing, the greater the illusion of presence, and the more lucrative the archival trove in question.

On the other hand, in its theorisation of the document's 'quasi infinité de couches, de strates archivales à la fois superposées, surimprimées et enveloppées les unes dans les autres' (*MA*, 42-3), *Mal d'archive* offers a compelling account of the inexhaustible intellectual value of every archived document. Even if it does not bear the literal traces of its author's pen, an edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* will always holds itself in reserve, stockpiling an infinite store of secrets and potential disclosures which may someday be deciphered by a '*scholar de l'avenir*' (*MA*, 64). The spacing of *différance* entails that every interpretation of a document can only ever be provisional; every act of reading is outdated in advance by an unforeseeable *à venir* which may one day overturn all conventional interpretations of the archived text. As Derrida points out in the opening pages of *Mal d'archive*, the tumultuous history of the Freud archives has been exemplary of this irreducible vulnerability towards reinterpretation.[130]

In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida represents the archive as torn between two poles: one looking to the past, to closure, to presence, the other to a future that is structurally

[130] See, e.g., Malcolm 1984 and Masson 1984. Almost two decades after the publication of *Mal d'archive*, the debate on the legitimate interpretation of Freud's personal papers continues to rage, notably in the recent exchange between Michel Onfray (2010a; 2010b) and Elisabeth Roudinesco (2010) concerning 'l'affabulation freudienne'.

unforeseeable. According to Derrida, the metaphysics of presence has attempted to think the archive solely on the basis of the former quality, as a faithful depository of *temps perdu*, and has excluded reflection on the archive's susceptibility to future reinterpretation. This dual structure is reflected in two ways of approaching the archive described in *Mal d'archive*, both of which underscore the financial register which frequently colours our discussion of archival *fonds*. The first consists in conceiving the archive according to a calculating economy of debt. Much of Derrida's work is preoccupied with the question of debt, for example his early essay on Paul Valéry's debt to Freud (*MP*, 325-63), his analysis of Freud's rejection of a debt to metaphysics in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' (see 2.ii), and his later treatment of the legacy of Marxism and 'l'état de dette' in *Spectres de Marx* (1993). For Derrida, these different types of debt are all underpinned by a common structure: the denial of spacing. As we have seen, spacing insinuates an irreducible difference in every act of repetition. The contracting of a debt, on the contrary, implies the identical repetition of a trace in a future context. According to this classical logic of repetition, the temporal difference between the inscription of a debt and its eventual repayment is either dismissed outright or is subject to meticulous calculation in advance (as 'appreciation' or 'interest'). As we saw in the Introduction (ii), this denial of spacing implied by the calculation of a debt inevitably produces aporias in the relationship between 'lender' (e.g. Freud) and 'debtor' (e.g. Foucault).

In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida approaches the structural affinity between debt and aporia in a number of ways. The concept of debt is central to Derrida's reading of Josef Hayim Yerushalmi's study, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991). In this work, written following the discovery of a new document among Freud's personal papers (a dedication written in Hebrew by Freud's father to his son), Yerushalmi sets out to demonstrate the 'secret' of the Freud archives: Freud's unacknowledged and therefore unpaid debt to his Jewish heritage. As we shall see, however, Yerushalmi's tenacious pursuit of this thesis is

threatened by a number of unresolvable contradictions. At the same time that he sets out to prove Freud's indebtedness to Jewish culture, Yerushalmi also attempts to dissolve his own methodological debt to psychoanalysis. In attempting to compartmentalise the procedures of the historian and the psychoanalyst, Yerushalmi falls prey to an assumption which Derrida claims is fundamental to Foucault's history of madness: that the historicising scholar is ultimately exterior to his or her historical object. Again, this assumption produces a number of aporias in Yerushalmi's account of his own methodological procedure.

In *Mal d'archive*'s analysis of these two types of debt at work in Yerushalmi's study, this chapter argues that a third type of debt is also at stake. This debt relates to Derrida's use of a number of psychoanalytic themes in his own theorisation of the archive. Although this debt has been neglected in critical accounts of *Mal d'archive*, it is crucial to understanding the theoretical objectives of Derrida's text.[131] Derrida's indebtedness to psychoanalysis, we shall see, is most explicit in his thinking of our 'mal d'archive', a feverish desire to archive that owes much to the psychoanalytic theory of the drive.[132] In this chapter, I show how it is in order to avoid Yerushalmi's aporetic relationship to psychoanalysis that Derrida proposes a thinking of the archive that is not bound by the solubility or insolubility of a past debt. This rethinking of the archive is broached through the financial metaphor of inheritance (*l'héritage*). Against a thinking of the archive founded on debt, Derrida conceives the archive as turned towards the future, a future in which our inheritance of the traces of the past (e.g.

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[131] *Mal d'archive* has been particularly influential in a 'theoretical' turn in archival studies (Cook 1997). Indeed, the vast majority of scholarly responses to the text have come from those working within the field of archival studies (Cook 1994; Cook 2001; Brothman 1997; Tyacke 2001) or the discipline of history (Steedman 2002: 1-38). In both cases, however, the debate concerning the role of 'postmodernist' theories of meaning and reference has obscured a key argument of Derrida's text: that our current thinking of the archive has been indelibly marked not by postmodernism but by the psychoanalytic concept of the psyche as a mnemic archive. The most extensive account of the text by Derrida's commentators has been provided by Herman Rapaport (2003: 75-95), a reading which usefully highlights Derrida's treatment of the archive as a site of trauma. In examining Derrida's critique of Freud's notion of trauma, however, Rapaport's account addresses only half of what I argue is a dual movement in *Mal d'archive*: Derrida's interrogation of Freud's debt to the metaphysics of presence *and* his inheritance of several psychoanalytic motifs in his own work.

[132] The relationship between spacing and our our 'mal d'archive' has already been touched on in the Introduction (iii.3).

Freud's writings) must be transformed in the light of the new, incalculable contexts in which they find themselves inscribed. In this regard, it is crucial to emphasise the subtitle of *Mal d'archive*: 'une impression freudienne'. Through this figure of impression, Derrida explores the possibility of a thinking of the archive that is not based on the repression of spacing. The notion of a 'Freudian impression' allows Derrida to pursue a thinking of inheritance based on the affirmation of the differential spacing separating a past inscription from its present and future contexts. Such a thinking is required because, as Derrida claims in his 'Prière d'insérer', 'point d'archive sans l'espacement institué d'un lieu d'impression': no inscribed trace is free of the unconditional belatedness of spacing as temporisation.

While Yerushalmi's study is undermined by its denial of indebtedness to psychoanalysis, Derrida begins his analysis of *Freud's Moses* by assuming his own irreducible debt to Freud. In this way, I argue, *Mal d'archive* provides us with a positive example of how an aporetic legacy such as psychoanalysis can be transformed through a process of reaffirmation, a process which results here in what Derrida calls 'un mode qui croise d'une certaine façon la psychanalyse et la déconstruction' (*MA*, 123).

i. Deconstruction and Debt

1. 'Qual Quelle: Les sources de Valéry'

The concept of debt plays a critical role in Derrida's engagement with psychoanalysis. Although the figure of inheritance does not appear until later in Derrida's writings, the importance of the concept of debt is clear from the beginning of his career. With the appearance of *Marges—de la philosophie* in 1972, debt becomes the locus of an increasingly insistent theoretical problem in Derrida's work. This problem takes centre stage in the collection's essay on Paul Valéry, 'Qual Quelle: Les sources de Valéry' (*MP*, 325-63). In

treating the uncertain status of legacy in Valéry's work, Derrida alights on the writer's frequent use of the image of the aquatic 'source'. In doing so, he identifies a correlation between the 'surabondance thématique' (*MP*, 332) of tropes of water, purity, and origins in Valéry's work and the writer's own aversion to two influential precursors: Nietzsche and Freud. For Derrida, Valéry's emphasis on the 'divine lucidité'[133] of water and on his own creativity as a wellspring is emblematic of a deeper, obsessive concern for the purity of his own intellectual project (*MP*, 328). In diagnosing Valéry's compulsive repetition of these figures, it is perhaps not surprising that Derrida turns to Valéry's trenchant disavowal of a debt to Freud. Crucially, as will be the case in *Mal d'archive*, Derrida diagnoses Valéry's fixation on the purity of origins by drawing from the theoretical wellspring (or re-source) of psychoanalysis.

Derrida claims that two types of resistance are at stake in Valéry's aversion to Freud. The first relates to Valéry's summary but strident dismissal of the intellectual value of psychoanalysis (*MP*, 356). Despite the obstinacy of his resistance, Derrida points out, a number of striking affinities exist between the work of Valéry and Freud. Valéry's analysis of Swedenborg's schizophrenia, for example, has much in common with Freud's study of another cultivated schizophrenic, President Schreber (*MP*, 354).[134] Similarly, Derrida argues that Valéry's treatment of subjectivity—his thinking of the self (*le moi*) as an effect of a wider system of differences, his intimation of a process of narcissism in the subject's relationship to itself, and his interest in the relationship between dreaming and wakefulness—suggests affinities between Valéry and Freud's respective projects that are far from superficial (*MP*, 356). In spite of these similarities, however, Valéry's hostility to psychoanalysis means that the chance for genuine intellectual engagement is lost. Instead of productive dialogue, Valéry's work abounds with sterile dismissals of psychoanalytic theory, with crude references

[133] Valéry 1957: 202.

[134] See *SE*, *XII*, 9-82.

to ‘Freud et Cie’ and to Freud’s ‘bêtise’ (*MP*, 356-7). For Derrida, this disavowal of influence produces an aporia of inheritance in Valéry’s work. Although Valéry calls himself ‘le moins freudien des hommes’, he frequently espouses views that are decidedly Freudian while claiming that these ideas are contrary to those held by psychoanalysts. He insists, for example, that ‘les théories [de] Freud répugnent à ma raison qui voudrait que dans les rêves les idées des choses les plus *insignifiantes* dans la veille jouent un rôle égal à celui joué par les choses qui ont ému ou émouvraient le plus’ (cited in *MP*, 357).[135]

The second type of resistance at stake in Valéry’s rejection of psychoanalysis relates not to the writer’s resistance to Freud but to the resistance of his concepts to those of psychoanalysis. While it may appear negative, Derrida points out, this resistance is nevertheless a potential source of productive theoretical dialogue. Derrida locates an example of this productive tension in the relationship between Valéry’s concept of the ‘implexe’ (by which he designates a subject’s futurity or potentiality) and Freud’s notion of the unconscious. Although Valéry insists that the notion of the implex is radically at odds with the Freudian unconscious, Derrida outlines a series of theoretical affinities and differences between both notions (*MP*, 360-2). In doing so, he argues that Valéry’s rejection of psychoanalysis—for its supposed extreme hermeneutics, its crude theory of symbolism, etc.—in favour of his own brand of literary formalism prevented him from engaging with aspects of Freud’s work that are irreconcilable with the caricatured view of psychoanalysis Valéry presents in his work (*MP*, 362). In this way, Derrida concludes, Valéry’s attempt at dissolving his debt to Freud prevents him from turning to aspects of the latter’s work that might have provided a useful conceptual resource in the articulation of his own project.

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[135] In this early essay, Derrida already questions the possibility that debt can be successfully or even satisfactorily calculated. He is pointed in his insistence that he will avoid any ‘historical’ analysis of Valéry’s rejection of Freud, that is, one which would attempt to explain Valéry’s aversion to Freud with reference to an insurmountably large (and ultimately incalculable) number of elements: the translation of Freud’s work into French, the resistance to Freud’s ideas in France, the contradictory nature not only of the work of Freud’s disciples but also of his own work (*MP*, 359).

2. Mal d'archive

In its account of Valéry's anxiety of influence, 'Qual Quelle: Les sources de Valéry' prefigures a number of themes central to Derrida's more detailed treatment of debt in *Mal d'archive*. Although the text as a whole is concerned with the question of intellectual debt, the theme is most cogently explored in book's longest section, 'Avant-propos' (*MA*, 55-128). In this section, Derrida undertakes a detailed reading of Josef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses*. In his analysis of Yerushalmi's study of Freud's Jewishness, Derrida draws attention to the interpretative dangers at stake in our conventional concept of the archive. Derrida describes this 'classique' concept of the archive as one which involves 'une modalité temporelle ou historique dominée par le présent ou par le passé' (*MA*, 55). According to this concept, the archive is merely the passive, technical receptacle of past traces, 'l'expérience de la *mémoire* et le retour à l'*origine*' (*MA*, 'Prière d'insérer'). Since the classical archive facilitates the resuscitation of a self-identical past as it 'was', in the present and for the future, it must be conceived as immune to the effects of spacing. In his reading of *Freud's Moses*, Derrida highlights the intrinsic relationship between Yerushalmi's classical conception of the archive (as the location of lost time) and his precipitous account of Freud's debt to Jewish culture.

The aim of Yerushalmi's study is to establish a causal link between the Jewish milieu of Freud's upbringing and his later foundation of the science of psychoanalysis. The book can thus be read as an attempt at reclaiming psychoanalysis's Jewish pedigree, despite Freud's own efforts to dissociate the two throughout his life.[136] Sanctioned by a classical concept of the archive, Yerushalmi's project is founded on the axiom that the truth of psychoanalysis as a

[136] For Freud's complex relationship towards his own Jewishness and Judaism more generally, see Gay 1988: 597-610. Derrida discusses Freud's ambivalence towards his Jewish and gentile colleagues in *Politiques de l'amitié* (*PA*, 310-2).

Jewish science is inscribed somewhere in the Freud archives. All that is required to reactivate the origin of psychoanalysis (its Jewishness) is that the relevant documents come to light and are subject to analysis by a historian trained in the interpretation of the traces of the past. In *Freud's Moses*, Yerushalmi deploys several novel readings of documents which have either been recently discovered (notably, a dedication written by Freud's father to his son) or which already possess a rich tradition of interpretation (Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, for example). In doing so, however, his interpretation exerts 'un pouvoir sur le document, sur sa détention, sa rétention ou son interprétation' (*MA*, 'Prière d'insérer').

Although Derrida highlights a number of ways in which Yerushalmi is imprudent in his reading of these documents, I will focus here on just one representative example. Much of the impetus of Yerushalmi's study stems from the then recent discovery of a text written by Freud's father, Jakob. Yerushalmi argues that this text, Jakob Freud's written dedication of a Hebrew Bible to his son, represents a 'crucial episode' in the relationship between psychoanalysis and Freud's Jewishness (*MA*, 62).[137] While Yerushalmi is not the first to reference the dedication in his work, he does claim that the note, composed in Hebrew, 'has never been properly transcribed [...], let alone adequately glossed'. His exegesis of the text fills these two lacunae and in doing so identifies Jakob's inscription as an important text in interpreting Freud's late *Moses and Monotheism* (1937) as a kind of religious autobiography, both of Freud and of the science he founded.[138]

The book containing Jakob's inscription was given to Freud in 1891, on the occasion of his thirty-fifth birthday. The book itself was a rebound edition of a Philippsohn Bible that Jakob had already given to his son as a child. While Jakob's rebinding of the book is a highly significant act in and of itself, it is his 'elaborate Hebrew inscription' that proves indispensable to the argument of *Freud's Moses*. This is because Jakob's inscription,

[137] Yerushalmi 1991: 70.

[138] Yerushalmi 1991: 71.

Yerushalmi points out, is written in a literary device known as *melitzah*. Formally speaking, the latter refers to a series of quotations taken from the Hebrew Bible which are woven together 'to form a new statement of what the author intends to express at the moment', similar in compositional terms to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[139] Although Yerushalmi provides a full prose translation of Jakob Freud's inscription, I will cite only its second half to give some idea of the deliberate confusion of past and present contexts entailed by *melitzah* as a formal device:

> Since then the book has been stored like the fragments in an ark with me. For the day on which your years were filled to five and thirty I have put upon it a cover of new skin and called it: 'Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it!' And I have presented it to you as a memorial and a reminder of love from your father, who loves you with everlasting love. Jakob Son of R. Shelomoh Freid [*sic*] In the capital city Vienna 29 Nisan [5]651 6 May [1]891.[140]

Yerushalmi argues that the most immediate question raised by the inscription is a practical one: if Sigmund Freud supposedly knew no Hebrew, why are Jakob Freud's elaborate remarks written in that language? This is particularly puzzling because Freud's father often wrote in German, although it is also possible (but 'not likely') that Jakob translated the inscription for his son orally.[141]

Given the decisive role of the inscription in Yerushalmi's wider argument, the interpretation of its language and of the fund of Jewish religious culture it draws on calls for considerable scholarly rigour. Reasoning that Freud's father would have had no need to locate the original quotations because they would have been known to him by heart, Yerushalmi argues that the impression of Jakob that emerges from the inscription is one of 'a tradition-minded Jew, whatever the degree or detail of his piety'.[142] Although he cites Thornton Wilder,

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[139] Yerushalmi 1991: 71.

[140] Yerushalmi 1991: 71.

[141] Yerushalmi 1991: 72.

[142] Yerushalmi 1991: 73.

who claimed that Freud told him that his father had been a 'Voltairian', Yerushalmi thoroughly dismisses this claim in his conclusion: 'make of that what you will, there is certainly no Voltairian here'.[143] Despite the ease with which he dismisses Freud's own reservations regarding his Jewish heritage, Yerushalmi does produce a brilliant formal reading of the inscription, one which closely interweaves the Biblical context of the citations with Jakob's personal relationship with his son. A reference to the tribal leader Ephraim, for example, 'symbol of the so-called Lost Tribes of Israel' and often 'depicted as a wandering exile', is interpreted as an allusion to Freud's original rejection and later acceptance of his Jewish heritage: 'the essence of the inscription is a call for Sigmund's return and reconciliation'.[144] The reference to Ephraim is taken as referring to Freud's abandonment of the Biblical studies he had begun at the age of seven, the age at which he had first received the gift of the Bible from his father, and his later return to the study of the Bible in *Moses and Monotheism*.

While this interpretation is a compelling one, Derrida is critical of the emphasis Yerushalmi's interpretation places on unproblematic values of circularity and repetition. The assertion of this circular 'return and reconciliation' of Freud to his religious heritage, resuming and repeating what had been long abandoned, is possible only by denying the irreducibility of difference in every act of repetition. Yerushalmi's argument for the simple circularity of this return is founded on a highly speculative historical a priori, namely that Freud *would have had to* have known how to read the Hebrew dedication: '[Freud] aurait dû savoir, très jeune, lire la dédicace. Il aurait dû, par conséquent, confesser son appartenance, rendant ainsi publique sa culture hébraïque, ou plus clairement qu'il ne l'a fait' (*MA*, 63). Drawing attention to the book's rebinding in a 'cover of new skin', Derrida reads Yerushalmi's interpretation of the inscription as a kind of *après coup* circumcision, a way of

[143] Yerushalmi 1991: 72.

[144] Yerushalmi 1991: 73.

drawing both Freud and the science he founded back into the Jewish Covenant and of thus reinstating a debt which Freud himself had repeatedly disavowed. In his interpretation of Jakob's gift, Derrida argues that Yerushalmi understands less 'donner' than 'rendre' (*MP*, 63), less the incalculability of a gift and more the calculation of a still outstanding debt.[145] What Jakob gives to his son is not the openness of an ideal gift (*don*), to use according to his own wishes and needs; rather, according to Yeruhshalmi's interpretation, Jakob's gift signifies the closure of a return (*rendre*), an enclosure within a circular tradition. Derrida links the physical trace of circumcision, the literal and figurative symbol of the Jewish Covenant,[146] with the 'new skin' of the leather-bound Bible on which Jakob inscribes his own mark. In doing so, he equates Yershalmi's interpretation of the inscription with the traditional circumcision of a child. The violence of circumcision, in which the newborn child is called into an alliance to which he cannot respond, mimics the violence of Yerushalmi's rejection of Freud's insistence on his father's 'Voltairian' heritage. Like the infant child, the dead Freud is 'infiniment inaccessible en sa toute-puissante vulnérabilité' (*MA*, 64); he can no longer respond, sign, or countersign (*MA*, 68).

Derrida is careful to note that, as a historian, Yerushalmi does not seek to deprive Freud of his right to speak. His intention is instead to give Freud the opportunity for a post-mortem confession of his belonging to the Jewish Covenant. In order to do this, however, Yerushalmi must recall and reject all of Freud's own protestations on the subject of his Jewishness (*MA*, 63). Freud's repudiation of his father's heritage—Derrida's word here is 'dénégation', the French term for psychoanalytic 'disavowal'—is interpreted by Yerushalmi in a way that parallels Freud's own concept of 'reaction formation'.[147] For Yerushalmi,

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[145] On Derrida's analysis of the paradoxical economy of the gift as debt, see Moore 2011: 7-16.

[146] The French word for 'Covenant' is *Alliance*, a word which can also signify a wedding ring and, through its Latin root, any general act of binding or tying together.

[147] Defined by Laplanche and Pontalis as an 'attitude ou habitus psychologique de sens opposé à un désir refoulé, et constitué en réaction contre celui-ci' (1971: 169).

Freud's insistence that his family were all Enlightenment freethinkers, 'qui ne gardaient plus grand'chose de la culture juive' (*MA*, 63), conceals the repressed truth of an unconscious indebtedness to Jewish culture.

What is important for Derrida here is that in contracting a debt between psychoanalysis and Jewishness, Yerushalmi reveals his own methodological debt to psychoanalysis. As we have seen, Yerushalmi's belief in the inherent calculability of psychoanalysis's debt to Freud's Jewish heritage leads him to inflict an interpretative violence on Freud's textual legacy. In his reading of *Freud's Moses*, Derrida identifies a second type of debt at work in Yerushalmi's text. This debt relates the influence of psychoanalysis on Yerushalmi's methodological procedure. Derrida is fascinated by Yerushalmi's repeated rejection of any continuity between the procedure of the historian and the technique of the psychoanalyst. More specifically, he is interested in Yerushalmi's insistence on the exteriority of his own discourse to that of Freud. It is in this disavowal of debt, in Yerushalmi's firm insistence on the purity of his own discourse vis-à-vis the object it treats, Derrida claims, that Yerushalmi already countersigns his own structural implication in Freud's breakthrough: 'si l'on a l'impression de pouvoir n'en pas tenir compte, en oubliant, en effaçant, en raturant ou en y objectant, on a déjà confirmé, on pourrait dire même contresigné (donc archivé) quelque "refoulement" ou quelque "répression"' (*MA*, 54).

Paradoxically, it is both despite and because of Yerushalmi's rejection of Freud's methodology that his discourse is indebted to the breakthrough of psychoanalysis. For Derrida this means that Yerushalmi's methodological position is divided against itself from the outset, undermined by a number of unresolvable contradictions which threaten the consistency of his theoretical position. This is because, in making use, whether consciously or unconsciously, of several psychoanalytic motifs in its methodological procedure, *Freud's Moses* becomes part of the object it claims to treat with total objectivity.

In *Freud's Moses*, Yerushalmi claims to adopt the procedure of a scholarly historian. He is severe, for example, in his appraisal of the scientific credentials of psychoanalysis, notably in his rejection of what he calls Freud's 'psycholamarckism'.[148] According to Derrida, Yerushalmi repeatedly assumes (in both senses of the word) his own belonging to 'la communauté scientifique des historiens ou des sociologues de la culture, en particulier de la culture juive' (*MA*, 85). While the general historical method adopted by Yerushalmi in *Freud's Moses* and in his work as a whole would call for detailed treatment in their own right, Derrida focusses only on the self-imposed limits of Yerushalmi's historicising procedure, on the 'cartographie des frontières' (*MA*, 86) separating the historicist and psychoanalytic procedures. As a rigorous historian, Yerushalmi 'prétend se tenir délibérément à l'extérieur de son objet' (*MA*, 86). If he wishes to maintain this exteriority, he must refrain from presenting himself either as a Jew or as a psychoanalyst. Indeed, Yerushalmi claims that a certain distance from both discourses is what is constitutive of the historicist procedure of *Freud's Moses*. As an epigraph to the text, for example, Yerushalmi cites Philippe Ariès's observation that

> on peut s'essayer à l'histoire du comportement, c'est-à-dire à une histoire psychologique, sans être soi-même ni psychologue ni psychanalyste et en se tenant à distance des théories, du vocabulaire et même des méthodes de la psychologie moderne, et cependant intéresser ces mêmes psychologues sur leur terrain.[149]

Against this claim, Derrida argues that any total exteriority of subject to object can only ever be theoretical fiction (*MA*, 87). Among the numerous instances of Yerushalmi's indebtedness to psychoanalysis highlighted by Derrida, one example is particularly striking. In a reading of Freud's *Autobiographical Study* (1924), Yerushalmi refers to Freud's theory of 'deferred obedience' (*nachträgliche Gehorsam*) (MA, 91). Freud uses the concept of deferred

[148] Yerushalmi 1991: 30.

[149] Yerushalmi 1991: 57; *MA*, 86-7.

obedience to explain why a patient's acquiescence to paternal law can become so much more acute following the death of the patient's father.[150] Yerushalmi appeals to what he calls the 'luxury' of this notion in his analysis of an observation made by Freud later in his life.[151] In his *Autobiographical Study*, Freud claimed that 'my deep engrossment in the Bible story (almost as soon as I had learned the art of reading) had, as I recognised much later, an enduring effect upon the direction of my reading' (*SE*, *XX*, 8). For Yerushalmi, this remark provides proof that

> under the impact of the triumph of Nazism, [Freud] decides the time has come to write his first and only Jewish book, to attempt to answer the hitherto unanswerable question of what makes him a Jew. In order to do so, at the age of seventy-eight he does what his father mandated to him when he was thirty-five—he returns to the study of the Bible.[152]

Critically, at least for Yerushalmi's wider argument, Freud's remarks regarding his 'deep engrossment in the Bible story' were not present in the first edition of his *Autobiographical Study*, but were added a year after he completed the manuscript of *Moses and Monotheism* in 1935. For Yerushalmi, while Jakob's inscription was written with the aim of calling Freud back to the Jewish culture of his upbringing, this observation reveals the extent to which Freud himself, in later life, recognised the necessity of his father's injunction:

> only now, in retrospect, did Freud realize the full impact of the study of the Bible on his life, and only now did he fully acknowledge it. In this sense *Moses and Monotheism* represents, at last, a fulfilment of Jakob Freud's mandate or—should I finally allow myself the luxury of a technical psychoanalytic term—an example of 'deferred obedience'.[153]

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[150] In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud explains how 'the dead father became stronger than the living one' with reference to 'the psychological procedure so familiar to us in psychoanalysis under the name of deferred obedience'. According to Freud's theory, 'totemic religion arose from the filial sense of guilt, in an attempt to allay that feeling and to appease the father by deferred obedience to him' (*SE, XIII*, 143; 145). A more detailed discussion of the concept by Derrida can be found in an essay on Kafka, 'Préjugés. Devant la loi' (1985) (*PDL*).

[151] Yerushalmi 1991: 77.

[152] Yerushamli 1991: 77.

[153] Yerushamli 1991: 77.

According to Yerushalmi, Freud's use of the concept of deferred obedience in *Moses and Monotheism* can be interpreted in the context of his own psychoanalytic framework. Two key components of the concept of deferred obedience are at stake in Freud's writing of the latter text: a period of delay (between Freud's abandoning and later reclaiming of his Jewish heritage) and acquiescence to the wishes of a father (Jakob Freud's injunction) (*MA*, 95).

Derrida makes a number of remarks concerning Yerushalmi's reference to deferred obedience here. In one sense, he points out, this reference threatens to destabilise the methodological consistency of a study supposedly exhibiting a constitutive distance from the object of its analysis. At the same time, Yerushalmi's reference to deferred obedience can be turned back on his own text; *Freud's Moses* can be read as articulating a deferred obedience of its own, both to the injunction of Jakob Freud (Yerushalmi's study delivers Freud back to his Jewish heritage) and, given the 'luxury' of Yerushalmi's use of the concept itself, to Freud's own work. At issue in each of these possibilities, Derrida claims, is the question of the frontiers between what is interior or exterior to the archive, in this case, the archive of psychoanalysis (*MA*, 92). Yerushalmi's reference to the concept of deferred obedience may seem slight, even trivial, but for Derrida the rigour of his entire enterprise is at stake in the attitude he adopts towards Freud's conceptual apparatus.

For Derrida, Yerushalmi's use of the luxury of the concept of deferred obedience involves 'le double geste de quelqu'un qui à la fois entend assumer et ne pas assumer la responsabilité théorico-scientifique d'un tel concept' (*MA*, 94). As we have seen, Derrida argues that a supposedly pure opposition such as the opposition between interior and exterior can only ever be an ideal, theoretical fiction. The procedure of the historian is always structurally indebted to psychoanalysis because psychoanalysis forms an irreducible component of the intellectual climate out of which it speaks. To deny the manner in which Freud's work has shaped modern thought is to deny 'des conditions élémentaires, de la

stabilité sémantique minimale et presque de la grammaire qui permettraient de parler de ce dont on parle' (*MA*, 88). If the science of psychoanalysis claims to transform the status of the historian's object—indeed, according to Derrida, psychoanalysis has transformed 'la structure de l'archive, le concept de "vérité historique", voire de science en général' (*MA*, 87)—then every historian must recognise his or her own unconditional interiority to the methods of psychoanalytic enquiry. This is even more so the case, Derrida argues, if the object of historical enquiry is psychoanalysis itself. In putting psychoanalysis out of play, Yerushalmi attempts to unburden himself of a debt towards his historical object. And in doing so, Derrida demonstrates, Yerushalmi, like Valéry, deprives his discourse of a rich theoretical resource.

In claiming to compose a history of psychoanalysis from a point of view that is itself 'purement a-psychanalytique' (*MA*, 88), Yerushalmi exposes his discourse to the same aporias which threatened, as we saw in the Introduction, the work of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault. His insistence on grounding his discourse in 'cette prétendu neutralité constative et théorique' fails to conceal that the ideal purity of this neutrality is as impossible as it is illegitimate (*MA*, 88). Pivotal to Derrida's treatment of Yerushalmi's ambivalence towards Freud is his interpretation of this ambivalence in terms of the psychoanalytic concept of disavowal. According to Derrida, Yerushalmi's theoretical position in *Freud's Moses* remains 'vouée à la dénégation', 'parfois avouée dans sa dénégation même' (*MA*, 88). In making this quasi-psychoanalytic claim, Derrida affirms something which Yerushalmi continually denies: his own interiority to the breakthrough of psychoanalysis.

ii. Deconstruction as Inheritance

1. Inheritance

In *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida associates the inheritance of a legacy with the positive duty of an affirmation:

> Considérons d'abord l'*hétérogénéité* radicale et nécessaire d'un héritage [...]. Un héritage ne se rassemble jamais, il n'est jamais un avec lui-même. Son unité présumée, s'il en est, ne peut consister qu'en l'*injonction* de *réaffirmer en choisissant*. *Il faut* veut dire *il faut* filtrer, cribler, critiquer, il faut trier entre plusieurs des possibles qui habitent la même injonction. Et l'habitent de façon contradictoire autour d'un secret. Si la lisibilité d'un legs était donnée, naturelle, transparente, univoque, si elle n'appelait et ne défiait en même temps l'interprétation, on n'aurait jamais à en hériter. On en serait affecté comme d'une cause—naturelle ou génétique. On hérite toujours d'un secret—qui dit 'lis-moi, en seras-tu jamais capable?' (*SM*, 40).

This passage is useful in clarifying the increasingly positive view of debt which characterises Derrida's later reading of Marx and Freud. As we saw in the Introduction (ii) to this thesis, an intellectual legacy is never identical to itself; it is always plural and therefore aporetic. The irreducibility of *différance* means that a legacy both inherits and disseminates aporias. An aporia is produced by the repression of spacing, a process that introduces undecidable semantic residues in the interpretation of past traces (this is what Derrida calls, as we shall see, the 'trouble d'archive'). It is because this interpretative vagueness inhabits every textual legacy that we are obliged to 'trier entre plusieurs des possibles qui habitent la même injonction'. As Derrida here claims, we can only reaffirm a legacy by choosing, that is, by retaining some elements and transforming others in the light of a movement of spacing that has rendered them out-of-date and thus inadequate to their contemporary context.

This necessity of deciding between undecidable elements in an inheritance is what produces the uncontrollable plurality of every legacy, exemplified, we saw, in the antagonism between ego-psychology and the Lacanian school over the legitimate interpretation of Freud's work (Introduction, iii.2). At the same time, the undecidability introduced by this semantic *trouble* generates the tenacious assertion of control over the interpretation of a legacy. For Derrida, nevertheless, it is this very undecidability which ensures the continued theoretical vitality and ultimately survival of a legacy. A legacy can only endure the upheavals of spacing by undergoing its own conceptual mutation in the face of its unconditional belatedness. The

richness of an inheritance, Derrida argues, can be measured through its flexibility in this regard, through its adaptability to contexts which were unforeseeable to the 'original' legator. In this sense, responsibility lies not in holding to the dogma of a textual legacy but rather in a kind of continual revolution in the conceptual apparatus of an inheritance (*DQD*, 16).

In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida describes the intrinsic relationship between spacing and the structural belatedness of a legacy using the example of advances in technological capability which Freud could not have anticipated. The theory and practice of psychoanalysis today, he argues, still very much belong to the historical moment in which Freud's ideas were first developed. Freud's topographical theory of the psyche, for example, is indebted to technologies of printing and impression which have long been superseded. Similarly, psychoanalysis's economic model of the mind owes much to nineteenth-century physical theories of energy, in particular Hermann von Helmholtz's principle of conservation.[154] When Derrida poses the question, then, of the future of psychoanalysis 'à l'ère du courrier électronique, de la carte téléphonique, des multimédia et du CDrom' (*MA*, 'Prière d'insérer'), he is highlighting the problem posed to every intellectual legacy by the process of spacing. In doing so, he identifies a lethargy in the psychoanalytic institution's relationship to theoretical models which are only becoming more outmoded. By calling us to take account of the differential interval separating us from the past, Derrida advocates the transformation of a legacy that would otherwise become ossified as dogma. A legacy such as psychoanalysis can only survive by undergoing its own transformation, by leaving behind certain conceptual models and modifying others to take account of situations and contexts which were unforeseeable to Freud and his contemporaries.

In this sense, Derrida's own work represents a powerful example of how Freud's ideas can be sifted, transformed, and exported into new contexts and disciplines beyond their

[154] The best account of Freud's use of scientific concepts in his modelling of the psyche remains Frank Sulloway's (1992) study of the influence of contemporary biology on psychoanalysis.

original provenance. Nevertheless, Derrida never reaffirms his inheritance of psychoanalysis without first confronting it with a series of critical questions. In the penultimate section of *Mal d'archive*, Derrida draws attention to a number of aporias which continue to divide Freud's legacy. Although these aporias appear to lead to a kind of double bind in psychoanalytic theory, Derrida argues that the thinking through of this theoretical paralysis represents a singular opportunity for the reaffirmation and transformation of Freud's project.

2. From Concept to Notion

In the 'Thèses' section of *Mal d'archive*, Derrida is unequivocal in his description of the aporetic character of Freud's legacy. His 'thèse au sujet des thèses de Freud' proposes that 'toutes les thèses freudiennes sont fendues, divisées, contradictoires, comme les concepts, à commencer par celui d'archive' (*MA*, 132). This division is not, however, unique to Freud's theoretical legacy. As Derrida argues here, *every* concept can be shown to be divided against itself because every concept is by definition predicated on the value of presence and thus on the repression of spacing. Stressing the semantic resonance of the German term for concept (*Begriff*), itself implying a process of grasping, seizing, or pinning down (*MA*, 94), Derrida claims that a concept can only operate by bracketing its immediate belatedness. As soon as a concept is attached to a particular phenomenon, the phenomenon becomes subject to a classical logic of repetition. Like the signifier, a concept cannot function as a concept unless it communicates the same phenomenon in different contexts and at different times. For Derrida, however, every repetition of a concept involves an irreducible difference that insinuates itself between repetitions of the phenomenon in question. The movement of spacing, we have seen, ensures that every concept, like every trace, is outdated in advance and thus in continual need of interrogation in the context of this irreducible belatedness. This is why, in 'La différance',

Derrida repeatedly stresses that *différance* is not a concept nor can it be reduced to one. On the contrary, *différance* is something which both happens to conceptuality (its temporising force ensures a concept is always outdated) and something which renders conceptuality possible (a concept is possible only on the basis of the movement of *différance*, on the basis of its difference from other concepts):

> le concept signifié n'est jamais présent en lui-même, dans une présence suffisante qui ne renverrait qu'à elle-même. Tout concept est en droit et essentiellement inscrit dans une chaîne ou dans un système à l'intérieur duquel il renvoie à l'autre, aux autres concepts, par un jeu systématique de différences. Un tel jeu, la différance, n'est plus alors simplement un concept mais la possibilité de la conceptualité, du procès et du système conceptuels en général (*MP*, 11).

The spacing of *différance* entails that every supposedly rigorous concept is affected by an originary *rigor mortis* which comes to divide a concept against itself. It is because of the structural belatedness at stake in the process of spacing that every concept 'ne fait jamais un avec lui-même' (*MA*, 132). When Derrida refers to the 'raisons essentielles' why a concept 'reste toujours inadéquat à ce qu'il devrait être' (MA, 51-2), it is the temporising movement of spacing he has in mind. This unconditional outmodedness explains why Derrida distinguishes between the 'concept' and what is usually interpreted as an unrigorous para-concept, the notion:

> J'oppose ici la rigueur du *concept* au vague ou à l'imprécision ouverte, à la relative indétermination d'une telle *notion*. 'Archive' est seulement une *notion*, une impression associée à un mot et pour laquelle Freud et nous n'avons aucun concept. Nous avons seulement une impression, une impression insistante à travers le sentiment instable d'une figure mobile, d'un schème ou d'un processus in-fini ou indéfini (*MA*, 51).

The concept of the archive is exemplary in this regard. This is because, given the relentless transformation of archival technologies, it is in need of constant refinement. It is no longer possible, for example, to define an archive as the *physical* depository of certain documents, as it was in the time of the Greek *archontes* (*MA*, 13). The increasing virtuality of archival

storage calls for a new concept of the archive, one which will itself be subject to upheaval in the context of unforeseeable future developments in archival technology.

This is why Derrida opposes the restrictive rigour of the concept to the flexible mobility of the notion. Philosophers in the classical sense, he argues, those 'philosophes ou savants' who privilege presence as the sine qua non of verification and truth, tend to dismiss the notion as a 'sous-concept' (*MA*, 51). They view the notion as precarious, threatened by 'l'infirmité d'un pré-savoir flou et subjectif, voué à je ne sais quel péché de nominalisme' (*MA*, 51). Contrary to this oppositional logic, Derrida argues that our concept of the archive has only ever been a notion. As soon as a concept of the archive is applied to the theory and practice of archiving documents, it is already outdated. Technological transformation will always bring with it a degree of de-sedimentation or upheaval in our definition of the archive. We need only think of the 'séismes de l'historiographie, aux bouleversements techniques dans la constitution et le traitement de tant de "dossiers"' (*MA*, 'Prière d'insérer') of the last century to see that this is the case. What is critical here, however, is that we must be both aware of the problems posed by spacing *and* the opportunities it presents for the transformation of a concept that is itself always moribund.

The irreducibility of spacing means that a concept is never at one with itself (*MA*, 132). For Derrida, Freud's concept of the psyche as a mnemic archive is exemplary of this division. Derrida's analysis of Freud's treatment of the psyche as a topographical archive is important for the current argument because it illustrates two things. On the one hand, it shows how Freud's concept of the psychical archive is contradictory precisely because of its indebtedness to metaphysical concepts of presence and absence, life and death, memory and its representation. On the other hand, it shows how Derrida's interrogation of the aporetic nature of Freud's concepts exemplifies his own inheritance of psychoanalysis, most compellingly in his insistence on our *mal d'archive* faced with the process of spacing.

Both gestures are evident in Derrida's analysis of Freud's discussion of psychical haunting. Freud was fascinated throughout his life by 'paranormal' phenomena such as telepathy, hypnosis, and spirits.[155] With respect to the latter, Freud devotes a number of texts —most famously his reading of Jensen's *Gradiva*—to theorising the psychical origins of our experience of ghosts. In his treatment of psychical haunting, Freud deploys the aetiological apparatus of psychoanalysis to explain the compulsive return of ghosts in human culture and history. He was one of the first thinkers, Derrida notes, to pose in a clear and direct manner the problem of this repeated return of the ghostly. At the same time, however, Freud 'a aussi tenté de les conjurer' (*MA*, 133). Although Freud drew attention to the persistence of the spectral in our experience the world, his rationalist positivism led him to lay human haunting to rest once and for all.

To demonstrate the aporetic nature of Freud's reflections on haunting, Derrida turns to an anecdote recounted by Freud towards the end of his essay, 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*' (*SE*, *IX*, 7-96). In this text, Freud illustrates his psychological explanation of Jensen's story by recounting a ghost story of his own. This anecdote arises during Freud's discussion of the relationship between Western rationalism and the public's continued belief in ghosts:

> the belief in spirits and ghosts and the return of the dead, which finds so much support in the religions to which we have been attached, at least in our childhood, is far from having disappeared among educated people, and [...] many who are sensible in other respects find it possible to combine spiritualism with reason (*SE*, *IX*, 71).

As evidence of this stubborn occultism, Freud relates the story of a doctor who had lost one of his patients to Graves' disease. The doctor 'could not get rid of a faint suspicion that he might have contributed to the unhappy outcome by a thoughtless prescription'. Some years later, a girl entered his consulting room whom the doctor immediately recognised as the girl who had

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[155] Derrida examines Freud's work on the phenomenon of telepathy in 'Télépathie' (*PSY*, 237-70).

died in his care. The doctor's mind, Freud tells us, was occupied by a single thought: 'so after all it's true that the dead can come back to life'. This dread eventually gave way to shame when the spectre introduced herself as the sister of the doctor's former patient, who suffered from the same disease as her dead sibling. As Freud explains, 'the victims of Graves' disease have a marked resemblance to one another; and in this case this typical likeness was reinforced by a family one' (*SE*, *IX*, 72).

Concluding this ghost story, Freud reveals himself to be the doctor in question. He does this in order to claim an affinity between his own delusions and those of Norbert Hanold, the protagonist of Jensen's story, *Gradiva*. 'I have a personal reason for not disputing the clinical possibility that Gradiva had come back to life. The fact, finally, is familiar to every psychiatrist that in severe cases of chronic delusions (in paranoia) the most extreme examples occur of ingeniously elaborated and well-supported absurdities' (*SE*, *IX*, 71). For Derrida, this anecdote neatly illustrates the divided nature of Freud's theory of haunting. On the one hand, Freud was the first to address the classical problem of the spectre in a rigorous way. By posing the apparently paradoxical question of what a 'real' (*wirklich*) ghost might be (*MA,* 135), Freud's reflections on psychical haunting destabilise an opposition central to Western rationalist discourse: the opposition between fantasy and reality, or the ghostly and the material. At the same time, however, Freud's theory of haunting ultimately belongs within this rationalist tradition. No one did more than Freud, Derrida claims, to establish a rigorously scientific account of our experience of ghosts, to banish the *revenant* through a positivist treatment of its psychical origins.

In this sense, Derrida argues, Freud suffered from a *mal d'archive*. In the above anecdote, the 'haunting' of the doctor's mnemic archive is exorcised by a return to the original traumatic event: the death of a patient in his care. The possibility of such a return is taken as axiomatic in Freud's conception of the psyche as an archive. Freud's mnemic archive

conforms in many respects to the classical concept of the archive outlined earlier in the chapter (i.2), that is, one founded on the value of presence and the unconditional possibility of the retrieval of time past. Indeed, according to Derrida, Freud figures the unconscious as a kind of perfect archive in which everything is recorded and nothing is forgotten or destroyed. As Freud claims in a number of texts, the unconscious should be conceived as a 'timeless' entity, one which escapes the dangers of temporal finitude and which produces, rather than is subject to, the vagaries of human memory.[156] If every sensory impression, whether or not it is 'experienced' in the present moment,[157] is inscribed in the unconscious without fail, awaiting interpretation and resuscitation by the patient's analyst, then Freud's unconscious is outside the reach of spacing and all of the hermeneutic *trouble* that spacing introduces in the interpretation of recorded traces. In this way, Freud's concept of the unconscious typifies his *mal d'archive*, his 'désir irrépressible de retour à l'origine', his 'nostalgie du retour au lieu le plus archaïque du commencement absolu' (*MA*, 142). Freud's belief in the atemporal structure of the unconscious and in the axiomatic possibility of a return to the origin of the impression, his *mal d'archive*, is both undermined and motivated by what Derrida calls 'le trouble d'archive' (*MA*, 141). Engendered by the movement of spacing, this irreducible semantic blur troubles our interpretation of every archived trace.

As is the case for his theory of haunting, Freud's theory of the psyche as archive is also divided. Freud's thinking of the unconscious as a virtual space, Derrida points out, has radicalised contemporary approaches to the archive. Following Freud's division of the psyche into topographical compartments (unconscious, preconscious, conscious), we can no longer conceive the archive on the basis of full and transparent presence alone, as the technical depository of a present moment that 'was'. In our post-Freudian world, it is now a structural

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[156] 'The processes of the system *Ucs.* [unconscious] are *timeless*; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all' (*SE*, *XIV*, 187).

[157] See the discussion of the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachträglichkeit* in Chapter 1 (ii.2).

possibility of every document that it may contain a displaced unconscious truth (a 'historical' truth, in the vocabulary of *Moses and Monotheism*) in addition to the immediate 'material truth' of the document's significance within the overall archive. Moreover, as we shall see in a moment, Derrida argues that the concept of the archive is unthinkable today without some idea of an aggressive drive towards destruction. There would be no archive, he points out, no drive to inscribe and archive the past, unless these traces were threatened from the beginning by their own finitude and potential destruction.

The semantic ambiguity of the term 'mal d'archive' suits this ambivalence in Freud's thinking of the archive: Freud is 'en mal d'archive' (in need of the archive, burning with a passion for inscriptions and origins) at the same time that his concept of the death drive as a destructive archival evil ('mal') sheds light on our compulsive need to archive the past. Freud's *mal d'archive*, his belief in the indestructibility of traumatic memory traces, is nonetheless frustrated by an irreducible *trouble d'archive*. This *trouble* means that the supposed transparency of the past in the archive is always rendered opaque by the temporising movement of spacing, by the piling up of new contexts which complicate our interpretation of the traces of the past. It is because of this hermeneutic trouble that Derrida claims that 'l'archive reste toujours un problème de traduction' (*MA*, 141). This semantic multiplicity explains our desire to seize control of the archive, to claim sole authority over its interpretation, and even to destroy it: 'c'est sans doute ce qui trouble et brouille la vue, ce qui empêche le voir et le savoir, mais aussi le trouble des affaires troubles et troublantes, le trouble des secrets' (*MA*, 141). In this sense, archival 'trouble' refers to both an ineradicable opacity in the resuscitation of the past and (more in keeping with the English sense of the word) to the conspiracies and controversies which consist in suppressing this undecidability (again, the tumultuous history of the Freud archives, both in France or abroad, provide ample evidence of this dual meaning of *le trouble d'archive*).

What must be borne in mind here, however, is that Derrida criticises Freud's theory of the unconscious as a perfect archive at the same time that his account of our *mal d'archive* draws on the conceptual inheritance of psychoanalysis. Derrida's description of the *mal d'archive* as a drive that seeks both to inscribe and destroy the trace retains and transforms a number of elements from the conceptual legacy of psychoanalysis: a desire for origins, compulsive repetition, the threat of radical destruction, etc. In the 'Thèses' section of *Mal d'archive*, Derrida describes three ways in which his deconstruction of the concept of archive inherits from the breakthrough of psychoanalysis. What Derrida refers to here as Freud's upping-of-the-ante or outbidding ('surenchère') refers to the way Freud, at the moment he articulates and even formalises the conditions of our *mal d'archive* (spacing as temporisation), fails to recognise the interdependence of the *mal* and the *trouble d'archive*, of spacing as spatialisation and spacing as temporisation. While psychoanalysis yields the theoretical tools necessary for a diagnosis of our drive to archive (namely, the hypothesis of an originary drive towards aggression), it ultimately succumbs to this same archival illness. Freud continues to believe that spectrality can be banished through a return to origins, a return which is guaranteed by a classical concept of the unconscious as an archive outside the reach of finitude.[158] Glimpsing the *trouble d'archive* that complicates the total resuscitation of a past impression, Freud responds with a kind of reaction formation and attempts to 'outbid' this *trouble* by repressing it, by insisting on the structural possibility of the reawakening of the past through the trace.

[158] Derrida frequently invokes Freud's belief in this structural possibility of a return to the *arkhē* with reference to the archaeological analogies Freud uses to describe the return to unconscious traces (e.g., *MA*, 144). The importance of these analogies for Derrida has been explored by Orrells 2010.

3. Outbidding Psychoanalysis

Derrida describes three ways in which Freud raises the stakes in his account of the unconscious as an archive. What is noteworthy here is that in highlighting these aporias in Freud's work, Derrida draws attention both to Freud's indebtedness to the metaphysics of presence *and* to Derrida's own inheritance from the legacy of psychoanalysis. A first 'surenchère' can be found in Freud's concept of the archive. In his thinking of the psyche as a virtual topography of memory traces (and of the processes associated with this virtualisation of psychical space: repression, suppression, displacement between sites of inscription, etc.), Freud transformed our general concept of the archive. In his account of psychical spacing ('un *espacement* psychique'), Freud gave pride of place to the *substrate* of memory, that is, to the spatialisation or technical inscription of an impression. In this way, and unlike the classical concept of the archive, Freud's archival model is not beholden to the value of full and transparent presence. In Freud's notion of the unconscious, the past is no longer im-mediately accessible to consciousness. By drawing attention to memory as a process of spatialisation, Freud's model foregrounds the dangers of forgetting and destruction which irreducibly threaten every real and mnemic archive. In doing so, Derrida claims, psychoanalysis has heavily influenced the way we conceive and theorise the archive today.

At the same time, however, Freud's rethinking of the archive did not prevent him from reaffirming the Platonic opposition between living memory (*mnemē*, *anamnesis*) and its externalised, technical representation (*hypomnesis*). As we saw earlier, a key symptom of Freud's archive fever is his determination to exteriorise the role of the *technē*: 'd'où la surenchère archéologique par laquelle la psychanalyse, dans son mal d'archive, tente toujours de revenir à l'origine vive de cela même que l'archive perd en le gardant dans une multiplicité de lieux' (*MA*, 143). Freud's reduction of the *technē* is evidenced in the archaeological

analogies he frequently uses to describe unconscious traces. His desire for the archive, for an unified origin unthreatened by hermeneutic *trouble*, is exemplified in his description of the unconscious as a ruin and of the analyst as a kind of archaeologist. Freud's claim that for the archaeologist-psychoanalyst the ruins speak for themselves ('*Saxa loquuntur!*', *SE*, *III*, 192), without mediation or the requirement of interpretation, represents the fantasy of an archive free of technical inscription ('en direct, sans méditation et sans retard', *MA*, 144-5) and thus the *trouble* of spacing.

A second upping-of-the-ante is legible in Freud's discussion of patriarchal law. For Derrida, no one has illuminated better than Freud the archontic principle of the archive, the intrinsic relationship between the *archē* as beginning and 'l'*arkhē* nomologique de la loi, de l'institution, de la domiciliation, de la filiation' (*MA*, 148). The 'principe archontique' (*MA*, 14) refers to the practice in Ancient Greece of depositing legal documents in the houses of the 'archons' of the city state, male magistrates charged not only with the protection of legal documents but also with their interpretation. Derrida is explicit in foregrounding his inheritance from Freud's analysis of patriarchal law—in his theory of deferred obedience to the father, for example—is exemplary in its 'déconstruction' (*MA*, 148) of the roots of paternal authority. At the same time, however, in his life and in his work, 'Freud a répété la logique patriarcale' (*MA*, 148). In the Rat Man case, for example, Freud declares that patriarchal law (*Vaterrecht*) marks the beginning of the civilisation of human society.[159] In his professional life, Freud established the International Psychoanalytic Association on a law of patriarchal succession, unifying his disciples under the sovereignty of a single authoritative figure. So powerful was Freud's patriarchal influence over this institution, Derrida points out, that even today, decades after his death, analysts still question whether or not they are speaking in Freud's name (*MA*, 148).

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[159] 'A great advance was made in civilization when men decided [...] to make the step from matriarchy to patriarchy' (*SE*, *X*, 233, n.).

A final thesis relates to the question of destruction. On the one hand, both the concept and the existence of the archive are predicated on the threat of destruction posed by a drive towards aggression, by what Derrida calls 'la finitude' and 'l'expropriation originaires' of every archived trace (*MA*, 146). The finitude of the trace is caught up with 'ce mouvement proprement *in-fini* de destruction radicale sans lequel ne surgirait aucun désir ou mal d'archive' (*MA*, 146). Notably in those texts contemporaneous with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud attempted to explain why there is 'archivation' (i.e., the organism's drive to bequeath its genetic material to future generations) and, at the same time, preceding this drive and claiming authority over it, a drive towards destruction. The 'destruction anarchivante' of this drive both produces the organism's drive towards inscription and threatens to destroy these same inscribed traces: it 'produit cela même qu'elle réduit, parfois en cendres' (*MA*, 146). Nevertheless, in spite of his discovery of an originary death drive, as an '*Aufklärer* positive' indebted to classical metaphysics and positivist discourse, Freud did not really believe in the radical destruction of past traces. This is clear from his repeated reference to the unconscious as an archaeological site in which the trace of a perceptual experience is always recorded; this trace can always be resuscitated provided the archaeologist-analyst is equipped with the appropriate hermeneutic framework. In this way, Freud can be said to enact 'la surenchère archéologique d'un retour à la réalité, ici à l'effectivité originaire d'un sol de perception immédiate' (*MA*, 147).

4. Derrida's Freudian Impression

I have argued in this chapter that Derrida's discussion of our collective *mal d'archive* involves a reflection on Freud's indebtedness to the metaphysics of presence and on his own indebtedness to psychoanalysis. The ambivalence of this double debt calls, at least in *Mal*

d'archive, for close theoretical reflection on the process of inheritance. This reflection is provided in Derrida's account of 'l'impression freudienne', a notion he examines at the beginning of *Mal d'archive*. Unlike the classical concept of the archive, an 'impression' does not calculate with the past as a debt or burden, but instead emphasises the openness of every concept towards reinscription in a new and unforeseeable context. Derrida's inheritance from psychoanalysis's conceptual framework, in other words, the impression left by Freud on deconstruction, is clear from his thinking of our drive to inscribe and archive. Yet this inheritance always involves a gesture that is at once critical and affirmative, as 'révolutionnaire' as it is 'traditionnelle' (*MA*, 20). The three aporetic 'thèses' outlined above give ample evidence of this requirement of repetition in difference.

The notion of impression in *Mal d'archive* can be read as a non-synonymous substitution for what Derrida calls 'l'héritage' (*SM*, 40). Derrida's understanding of the term 'impression' is sketched in *Mal d'archive*'s 'Préambule' section, in which he notes that the word collates ('en surimpression') three distinct but related senses (*MA*, 45). The first sense relates to the physical action of imprinting, to the difficult question of 'le moment *propre* de l'archive, s'il y en a un, l'instant d'archivation *stricto sensu*' (*MA*, 46). This cannot be memory in its living and spontaneous form (that is, neither *mneme* or *anamnesis*) because, as Freud's work has shown us, the archive always involves 'une certaine expérience hypomnésique et prothétique du support technique' (*MA*, 46). As we saw in Chapter 1 (ii.1), the discourse of psychoanalysis has a complex relationship to physical space and thus to the activity of imprinting. Although Freud's work abounds with analogies taken from the realm of printing, to memory as a form of inscription or writing, his conception of the psyche as a virtual topography is situated halfway between physical space and Derrida's own concept of spacing. At the same time, although Freud's work is indebted to then contemporary practices of printing and archival storage, psychoanalysis has in turn influenced the way we think about

archival inscription today, as the potential site of forgetting, destruction, and the disclosure of troubling secrets. In this sense at least, Freud has left an impression on the way we continue to understand the archive today. Indeed, for Derrida Freud's influence can only become more acute, as the archive itself becomes, like Freud's psychical topography, an increasingly virtual entity, 'sans fondement, sans support, sans substance, sans subjectile' (*MA*, 47).

The second sense of the word 'impression' refers to something that is uncertain. An 'impression' always involves a certain indeterminacy, vagueness, or undecidability. This meaning of the word 'impression' is critical in accounting for the relationship between spacing and Derrida's theory of intellectual inheritance. For Derrida, as we have seen, there are essential reasons why Freud was never been able to formulate a rigorous concept of the archive. Freud's concept of the archive was always already out of date because it was never adequate to the pace of technological development; it could only ever have been 'une impression, une série d'impressions associées à un mot' (*MA*, 51). Again, what is critical here is Derrida's distinction between the rigorous inflexibility of any conceptual account of the archive (the Latin *rigor* connotes stiffness or rigidity) and what he calls 'la relative indétermination d'une telle *notion*' (*MA*, 51). If it cannot designate an adequate concept, Derrida reasons, then the archive can only ever be a notion, 'une impression associée à un mot et pour laquelle Freud et nous n'avons aucun concept' (*MA*, 51). Nevertheless, it is this same instability which endows the impression with its theoretical mobility, in its applicability to unpredictable future circumstances. In this way, the impression constitutes 'la possibilité' and 'l'avenir même du concept' (*MA*, 51). If the concept is rigorously closed upon the value of presence and thus always outdated in advance, the impression is open to reaffirmation and transformation in the future.

Both of these senses of 'impression' are brought together in the word's third sense. This final meaning refers to the impression left by Freud on our thinking today, that is, the

way in which we have and continue to inherit from the breakthrough of psychoanalysis. If psychoanalysis remains 'the mother tongue of our modernity', then the scope of this *impression freudienne* may be incalculable.[160] Derrida's invocation of 'l'*impression laissée* par Freud' refers to

> l'événement qui porte ce nom de famille, l'*impression* quasiment inoubliable et irrécusable, indéniable (même et surtout par ceux qui la dénient) que Sigmund Freud aura *faite* sur quiconque, après lui, parle *de lui* ou *lui* parle, et doit donc, l'acceptant ou non, le sachant ou non, se laisser ainsi marquer: dans sa culture, sa discipline, quelle qu'elle soit (*MA*, 53).

So much has Freud impressed the way we think and articulate ourselves today that it is now impossible, irrespective of one's discipline or field, 'de prétendre parler de cela sans avoir d'avance été marqué, d'une façon ou d'une autre, par cette impression freudienne' (*MA*, 53). The notion of aporia plays a key role here, for in attempting to reject the Freudian impression, we leave ourselves open in the same stroke to speaking, consciously or unconsciously, the language of that which we are trying to disavow. As we have seen, this difficulty threatened the projects of Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, and Yerushalmi, all of whom, in their respective ways, attempted to repress the Freudian impression which had marked their work in advance. On this point, Derrida is unequivocal. It is both 'impossible' and 'illégitime', he argues, to deny the influence of psychoanalysis 'sans avoir intégré, bien ou mal, de façon conséquente ou non, en la reconnaissant ou en la déniant, ce qui s'appelle ici l'*impression freudienne*' (*MA*, 54). For in naively believing we can put Freud's breakthrough out of play—'en oubliant, en effaçant, en raturant ou en y objectant'—we have already countersigned and thus archived the psychoanalytic processes of repression and suppression (*MA*, 54).

What the reading of *Mal d'archive* proposed above shows, I hope, is that Derrida's relationship to Freud's work involves a far deeper and more sustained engagement with

[160] Copjec 2004: 10.

psychoanalytic theory than a mere ventriloquising 'impression' of Freud.[161] *Mal d'archive*, we have seen, is a text which highlights the dangers of contracting and extracting too rigid a debt and which at the same time calls us to reflect on the richness of our intellectual inheritance.

One of the ways in which Derrida reaffirms the legacy of psychoanalysis, while also interrogating its indebtedness to metaphysics, is in his engagement with Freud's theory of the drives. In the following chapter, I will explore this engagement at greater length and show how Derrida's account of the death drive in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' is inextricable from his exploration of Freud's hypothesis of a drive to mastery that might be even more originary than a drive towards death, aggression, and destruction.

[161] This figure is used by several commentators to describe Derrida's engagement with Freud's work. Sarah Kofman argues that in appropriating Freud's concepts Derrida is merely miming a psychoanalytic register: 'malgré l'emprunt d'un certain nombre de concepts à la psychanalyse, malgré l'analogie du type d'écoute, la lecture du Derrida mime seulement celle de l'analyse' (1984: 107). The same analogy is used by Philippe Cabestan (2007: 89).

4

Mastering *Différance*
Freud and Derrida beyond the Death Drive

In the *Phaedo*, Plato's Socrates is placid in the face of demise. Condemned to death by the Athenian authorities, Socrates famously reasons that a life spent philosophising is a life spent preparing for death and dying.[162] According to his opening maieutics, Socrates conceives death as the 'separation [*apallagē*] of the soul [*psychē*] from the body [*soma*]'.[163] The word *apallagē*, however, signifies more than simple separation: it can also express a sense of 'departure', 'deliverance', or 'release' (*LSJ*). The latter rendering best encapsulates what for Derrida is the most significant feature of Plato's inauguration of philosophy: the privileging of the pure, living *psychē* over the impurity of a moribund *soma*. In 'La Pharmacie de Platon' (1968) (*D*, 77-213), Derrida argues that this *psychē-soma* distinction communicates with a series of asymmetrical oppositions central to Plato's philosophical project, such as truth-error, interior-exterior, speech-writing, life-death. The deeper significance of the *mise en scène* of Socrates's speech in the *Phaedo* becomes clear when framed within the context of this oppositional network. Socrates's argument that 'we men are in a kind of prison', articulated from within the walls of his Athenian prison cell, is thus suffused with a kind a triumphant Socratic irony.[164] According to Plato, political imprisonment is nothing compared to the imprisonment of the soul by the body. The *soma* is far more than a mere obstacle to truth; it is the source of all human misunderstanding and strife:

> It fills us with wants, desires, fears, all sorts of illusions and much nonsense, so that, as it is said, in truth and in fact no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body. Only the body and its desires cause war, civil discord and battles, for all wars are due to the desire to acquire wealth, and it

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[162] Plato 1997: 64a. References to the Greek text are taken from Plato 1990.

[163] Plato 1997: 64c.

[164] Plato 1997: 62b.

> is the body and care of it, to which we are enslaved, which compels us to acquire wealth, and all this makes us too busy to practice philosophy.[165]

Given the degradation of embodiment, the philosopher should have no fear of dying. The *telos* of death will allow him to escape the afflictions of his own body and grasp truth in its incorporeal and ideal essence. He can best prepare for this moment of unveiling (*apallagē*) by using the only means available to him of overcoming his body-prison: the contemplation of the soul. The philosopher approaches truth through the *psychē*, that is, through the act of thinking. The closer he comes to having 'no contact or association [with the body]', without 'dragging in any sense perception with his reasoning', the closer he approaches truth itself. For Plato, the search for truth is always predicated on this active separation (*apallagē*) of the soul 'from the bonds of the body'.[166]

The body, then, is transient, untrustworthy, flawed; the soul is its absolute contrary. This principle can be read in one of the most repeated images in the Christian kaleidoscope: the formation of man from clay and his infusion with the divine 'breath of life' (in its verbal form, the noun *psychē,* life, soul, spirit, means to 'to blow' or 'to breathe').[167] This inspiration at the origin of what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence—which is always, simultaneously, a metaphysics of life—testifies to the foundational opposition between life and death, soul and body, force and form at work throughout the Western tradition. As I suggested in Chapter 1 (i.2), Husserl's phenomenology of language aims at excluding the sign as the mortifying and derivative vessel of a more originary, living voice (*viva voce*). According to this logic, which finds in Plato's *Phaedo* one of its most potent manifestoes, philosophy begins with the progressive exclusion of the 'matière servile' (*ED*, 294) of the body and the external world. In Husserlian phenomenology, truth is again equated with the exclusive contemplation of the *psychē.* The more the soul is alone with itself, the less the

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[165] Plato 1997: 66a.

[166] Plato 1997: 67d.

[167] Genesis 2: 7.

soma contaminates it with the falsity of perception and the greater, finally, the adequation of psychical life to the Platonic forms or to phenomenology's objective idealities.

Against this logic of the living, the triumvirate of texts published by Derrida in 1967 work to unsettle conventional metaphysical oppositions between life and death, presence and absence, reality and its representation. *La Voix et le phénomène*, taking as its object a number of theoretical difficulties in Husserl's concept of the living present, begins by questioning the coherence of the Platonic opposition between life and death. As we saw in Chapter 1, Husserl's diverse reflections on language, temporality, and subjectivity are largely consistent with the Platonic rejection of the body. Like Plato, Husserl aims at eliminating the moribund body from the purity of the living present. When the exteriority of the sign as body is eventually shown to be inextricable from the region of the psyche, Husserl reduces the former to a quasi-invisible film of supposedly non-communicative, fictional 'signs'. Instead of death as the *telos* of life, the point at which the soul is released from its temporary prison, Derrida's notion of *différance* disturbs the apparent stability of this classical opposition between life and death.

It is no coincidence that the subtitle of Derrida's *La Carte postale* (1980), 'de Socrate à Freud et au-delà', bookends a metaphysical tradition stretching from Plato to Freud. The 'et au-delà' here no doubt alludes to the 'beyond' of Freud's pleasure principle. As we saw in Chapter 2, it is in the possibility of such a beyond, according to Derrida, that the liminality of psychoanalysis within the metaphysical tradition is best analysed. In his speculation on the possible existence of a duality of drives reigning over the psychical life of the subject, Freud posits the dynamic interplay of a libidinal life drive, which tends towards the joining of cellular structures and the production of genetic traces, and a death drive which tends towards cellular dismantling and destruction. Drawing on Freud's observation that both drives are operative from the very beginning of life, Derrida argues that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

breaks with a logic of the living that posits death as the *telos* of life. Instead, Derrida shows, Freud's theory of subjectivity can be interpreted as an *economy* of life and death, an economy of force and its inscription that is in several respects at odds with the classical account of subjectivity as founded on being as presence, promoted by both Plato and Husserl.

Although Freud's status as *huissier* prevents him from entirely breaking with this metaphysical privileging of life, his thesis concerning subjectivity as an economy of force (cathexis) and inscription (binding) anticipates in several respects the reading of *différance* I propose in this chapter. As I argued in Chapter 1, the spacing of *différance* implies a rethinking of life as an economy of death, a dynamic interweaving of force (temporisation) and its inscription (spatialisation). It is through this reading of *différance* as the deconstruction of the opposition between time and space, force and form, life and death that Derrida's intricate analyses of Freud's thinking of the death drive and the related concept of binding (*Bindung*) are best understood. What Derrida refers to as the necessity of a new 'économie bindinale' (*CP*, 415) is founded on a reading of Freud's hypothesis of a drive towards mastery that is even more originary and more authoritative than either the pleasure principle or the death drive. In the same way that Freud links the binding of cathectic energy to a process of psychical mastery, for Derrida our sense of mastery over *différance* as delay (the temporising movement of spacing) is possible only on the basis of the spatial and technical inscription of its force.

i. The Logic of the Living

If Plato looks to Socrates' last moments as a fitting setting for a discourse on death, it may be useful to look to a similar moment in Derrida's life to clarify his own understanding of life and death. The title of Derrida's final interview, 'Apprendre à vivre enfin', given to *Le Monde*

a few short months before his death in 2004, is an explicit rejection of Socratic cheerfulness in the face of death. Derrida here refuses to accept the possibility that one can become at peace either with one's death or with one's life. This is because both imply absolute mastery over something that is by its nature unmasterable: the movement of *différance* as a structure of *sur-vivance* (*AV*, 24). For Derrida, death does not supervene, as *apallagē*, at the end of life; rather, death is a phenomenon that is 'rigoureusement originaire' (*AV*, 33). Coiled at the heart of life, death constitutes the identity of the *vivant* since without the inscription of a trace (itself implying the 'death' of the subject) there is nothing that can be said to 'live' as such.

What is perhaps most striking about Derrida's discussion of death in this interview, however, is its fluent continuity with his earlier work. Facing the inevitability of an all too real death from pancreatic cancer, the fundaments of Derrida's thinking remain remarkably consistent with the treatment of death proposed in his earliest writings. In the opening session of his 1975-1976 seminar on 'La vie la mort', for instance, Derrida begins with a caution:

> il ne s'agit donc pas pour moi [...] de chercher à identifier la vie et la mort, à dire la vie *est* la mort, proposition qui vous le savez peut se soutenir de multiple façons, par mille voies bien connues. Le trait blanc entre la vie et la mort ne vient pas à la place d'un et ni d'un est.[168]

When Derrida later refers, in his interview with Jean Birnbaum, to survival (*la survie*) as the 'complication de l'opposition vie/mort' (*AV*, 54), it is the complexity of this same 'trait blanc' that he has in mind. In what follows, I will try to lay out precisely what Derrida means by the spacing of this white *blanc* separating *la vie* from *la mort* and to consider, indeed, whether such a spacing can be said to constitute a form of separation (*apallagē*) in the first place.

1. Life and Death in Phenomenology

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[168] 'La vie la mort', Unpublished Seminar, 1975-1976, Séance 1. Archives Jacques Derrida, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), Caen. Accessed April 2011.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that Derrida's *La Voix et le phénomène* questions the stability of a number of oppositions central to Husserl's phenomenology of language, chief among them the distinction between presentation and re-presentation, interiority and exteriority, psyche and world. Critical to all of these distinctions, we saw, was Husserl's opposition between time and space, a distinction which Derrida's notion of spacing aims at deconstructing. The movement of differential spacing, we saw, both enables and undermines the possibility of discrete categories such as the opposition between 'time' and 'space'. In this section, I argue that for Derrida Husserl's phenomenology of the language is also underpinned by another and perhaps more pervasive duality: the opposition between life and death. As we shall see, phenomenology's attachment to the concept of life implicates Husserl's project in a metaphysical privileging of presence that reaches back to Plato, 'la plus pure traditionalité de la philosophie occidentale, celle qui, par-delà son anti-platonisme, reconduit Husserl à Platon' (*ED*, 46).

Much of the originality of *La Voix et le phénomène* lies in the associations it draws between Husserl's apparently marginal phenomenology of language and the more recognisably phenomenological theme of the subject's relationship to the external world, notably as it is oriented by the living present. Derrida's analysis links Husserl's diverse reflections on language, truth, and logic to the underlying privilege phenomenology accords to the value of life (*Leben*). It is this privileging of the living that leads Husserl to reject the exterior spatiality of writing and found his analysis of language and subjectivity on the immediacy of interior monologue. Derrida's exploration of the status of presence and non-presence in Husserl's phenomenology continually recalls these values to their implication in the metaphysical opposition between life and death, to what he calls 'l'énigme du concept de *vie* dans les expressions de présent vivant et de vie transcendentale' (*VP*, 5).

As I argued in Chapter 1, Husserl's theory of language is the *creuset* of a number of theoretical difficulties which threaten to compromise his phenomenological project. The problem of communication, both between consciousnesses and between consciousness and itself (Derrida begins by questioning this distinction), is central to Husserl's insistence on life as primary and original and his exclusion of death as secondary and derivative. Husserl's search for a pure logical grammar requires, we saw, a comprehensive reduction of language. In order to achieve this reduction, Husserl distinguishes between 'indicative' signs (*Anzeichen*, *indice*) and 'expressive' signs (*Ausdruck*). I will not return substantially to this opposition here, since it is one of the most well-trod passages in readings of Derrida's relationship to Husserl.[169] What is essential to retain of this distinction, however, is the notion of communication. We can understand 'communication' here as the becoming-corporeal of ideal meaning: the *eidos* takes form or vessel through the body of a formerly dead sign. For Husserl, communication occurs only in the case of indicative signs, which he defines by their spatialisation, sensibility, or extendedness. Indicative signs belong to the world, something Husserl conceives as everything that is outside the region of the psyche. These signs embody the ideal meanings of interior life in order to manifest such essences in the external world, representing them for and to the 'other'. This occurs, for example, in conventional writing, which for Husserl is always an intersubjective form of communication. Communication is in this sense 'une couche extrinsèque de l'expression' (*VP*, 21) because expressive signs are always defined by Husserl as those occurring within the psyche. Such signs are fundamentally non-communicative: they cannot logically 'embody' any meaning since, according to the principle of principles, they must be immediately present to the self in the inner life of consciousness.

[169] An excellent account of Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's theory of signs can be found in Lawlor 2002: 166-208.

Derrida argues that it is the living itself, or the very aliveness (*Lebendigkeit*) of the living, that always escapes the phenomenological reduction. Husserl's bracketing aims at sweeping away everything except the transcendental life of the ego (*VP*, 14). This dismissal of the materiality of the body echoes Plato's discussion of immortality in the *Phaedo*. As Derrida points out, the distinction between expression and indication takes place in the context of a sequence of oppositions that can be traced to Plato's inauguration of philosophy: existence-essence, *de facto-de jure,* worldliness-transcendentality, body-soul (*VP*, 32). Husserl's theory of language relies particularly on this latter opposition because, as Derrida shows, he conceives the sign as dead (as a merely indicative *Körper*) unless it is animated by a living breath and thereby transformed into an expressive *Leib* (*VP*, 15). We can now see that Derrida's interrogation of Husserl's distinction between indication and expression ultimately entails a deconstruction of the opposition between life and death. In phenomenology, the spatiality and sensibility of the inscribed sign is persistently excluded from the inner life of the subject. Solitary psychical life must remain uncontaminated by the dangers that the corporeal introduces into the purity of spiritual life (*Geist*). The *Phaedo*'s founding opposition between body and soul is not only at work here but is in fact 'confirmée' by Husserl's analysis (*VP*, 37).

2. Autoaffection

The connection between Husserl's phenomenology of life and his reduction of communication becomes clear when we turn to a process that Derrida, alluding to Heidegger's reading of Kant, calls 'autoaffection'. The crux of Derrida's argument against Husserl's insistence on the presence-to-self of the subject (in the twofold sense of temporal and spatial presence) rests on the putative purity of the subject's *Selbsaffektion* ('self-

affection', 'self-referencing', or *auto-affection* in Derrida's French translation). In Husserlian phenomenology, the subject's givenness to itself is always taken as axiomatic; indeed, it is only on the basis of the subject's self-presence in inner psychical life that 'exterior' objects can be said to appear as such. As we saw in Chapter 1 (i.3), Husserl argues that in the purity of inner psychical life, the subject grasps itself in the now-point of a present moment. Derrida refers to this self-same immediacy as 'auto-affection' in order to implicate Husserl's account of subjectivity within a larger metaphysical tradition, represented here by Heidegger's reading of Kant in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*VP*, 93). In Heidegger's study, Kant's concept of *Selbsaffektion*, like Husserl's now-point, refers to the grounding of a pure interior subjectivity.[170] Heidegger argues that 'inner affection must come forth from out of the pure self; i.e., it must be formed in the essence of selfhood as such, and therefore it must constitute this self in the first place. Pure self-affection provides the transcendental, primal structure of the finite self as such'. Like Husserl, Heidegger's thinking of autoaffection reduces 'time' to the inner life of the subject's pure experience of itself, since 'time and the "I think" no longer stand incompatibly and incomparably at odds; they are the same'.[171] Derrida counters this argument for the purity of the subject's inner experience of time by showing how every act of autoaffection fails in its attempt to exclude the constitutive spatiality required by temporalisation. In doing so, the concept of autoaffection dissimulates beneath the guise of sameness (*autos*) an underlying non-presence or alterity: the necessary detour of all presence-to-self through inscription and thus self-difference (what Derrida frequently calls *hétéro-affection*).

An unconditional and irreducible becoming-other ('hétéro-'), Derrida argues, infects every movement of autoaffection because every movement of autoaffection entails a simultaneous self-inscription, exteriorisation, or spatialisation. In the kind of autoaffection at

[170] Heidegger 1991: 188.

[171] Heidegger 1997: 134.

stake in Husserl's account of the inner life of the subject, there is no separation between affecting and affected subject. Derrida argues that this closed circuit is fatally compromised by the presence of signs in interior monologue because the materiality of the sign constitutes a threat to the faithful vectoring of ideal sense. This was why, we saw in Chapter 1, Husserl is obliged to claim that the signs of inner life can only ever be 'fictional'.

Opposing Husserl's faith in the purity of autoaffection, Derrida shows how self-presence is possible only on the basis of a detour through non-presence. The movement of spacing, signalling both the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space, is central to Derrida's critique of Husserl's argument for the purity of the subject's inner life. Derrida equates non-presence, which threatens even the supposed purity of inner psychical life, with a minimal inscription (spatialisation) required for the self to grasp itself as 'present' to itself. But inscription is also equivalent to the death of the subject, since every inscribed mark is structurally threatened by the possibility of its own future erasure: 'l'apparaître du *je* à lui-même dans le *je suis* est donc originairement rapport à sa propre disparition possible. *Je suis* veut donc dire originairement *je suis mortel*' (*VP*, 60-1). The pure interiority of the subject is always dependent on the impure exteriority of an outside. In a section of *La Voix et le phénomène* entitled 'La Voix qui garde le silence', Derrida implicates the supposed purity of autoaffection with the purity of the concept of life:

> Quand je parle, il appartient à l'essence phénoménologique de cette opération que *je m'entende dans le temps* que je parle. Le signifiant animé par mon souffle et par l'intention de signification (en langage husserlien l'expression animée par la *Bedeutungsintention*) est absolument proche de moi. L'acte vivant, l'acte qui donne vie, la *Lebendigkeit* qui anime le corps du signifiant et le transforme en expression voulant-dire, l'âme du langage semble ne pas se séparer d'elle-même, de sa présence à soi. Elle ne risque pas la mort dans le corps d'un signifiant abandonné au monde et à la visibilité de l'espace (*VP*, 87).

Against this view, Derrida argues that the purity or aliveness (*Lebendigkeit*) of the living present is always *affected* by an inaugural exteriority. In the same way, the putative

'génération spontanée' (*VP*, 95) of the living present conceals an underlying autoaffection of time: the living present must affect itself, that is, inscribe itself, in order both to be 'now' and to be retained in a future now. In this same footnote (*VP*, 94, n.1), Derrida defines the relationship between temporalisation and spacing as the necessary relationship of the present moment to its outside, to an *other* present moment. We only become aware of the flow of temporality with reference to its spatial inscription, on the face of a clock, for instance, or in the movement of a shadow. Similarly, the 'subject' can only grasp itself as subject by inscribing itself through a form of 'exterior' technics (for example, writing, speech, a mirror). In exteriorising itself in this way, however, the subject becomes estranged from itself and undergoes its own 'death' through writing. The process of spacing immediately outdates any inscription, however enduring its 'permanent' form: it cannot be reawakened in a way which conforms to its 'original' meaning and it is in this sense that inscription constitutes a kind of death.

Since *différance* is defined as 'la finitude de la vie comme rapport essentiel à soi comme à sa mort' (*VP*, 114), any spatialisation of the temporal is associated with the becoming-death of life. This constitutive death is implied in every moment of life as the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of life in general. According to Derrida, life is never 'pure' but signifies instead a constant process of impure survival: 'je vis ma mort dans l'écriture'; 'la trace que je laisse me signifie à la fois ma mort, à venir ou déjà advenue, et l'espérance qu'elle me survive. Ce n'est pas une ambition d'immortalité, c'est structurel' (*AV*, 33). In order to suppress this unconditional structure of the trace as *la vie la mort,* the metaphysics of presence invests its authority in the 'living' voice of the subject and in the possibility of the identical repetition of the object. Derrida argues, however, that this inner speech must be conceived as the *technical mastery* ('maîtrise *technique*') of objective being (*VP*, 84). As we shall see, this intrinsic link between the *technē* and mastery is crucial to

understanding not only Derrida's thinking of *différance* as *la vie la mort* but also his interest in Freud's hypothesis of an originary drive for mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*).

ii. Technics and Mastery

In *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida conceives *différance* as 'un jeu de la vie et la mort dans le *Je*' (*VP*, 112). Functioning here as another 'substitution non synonymique' for *différance*, Derrida's notion of *la vie la mort* represents a radical rethinking of 'life' in its conventional sense: the process that is eventually interrupted, Plato tells us, by the *apallagē* (separation, release) of death.[172] Against the logic of the living espoused by Socrates in the *Phaedo* and repeated in the work of Husserl, the spacing of *différance* involves the dynamic interweaving of presence and absence, time and space, life and death. For Derrida, the notions of absolute life (eternity, immortality) and absolute death (total absence) at stake in Plato's dialogue are structurally untenable because, when pressed to their logical limits, each implies an indistinguishability of absolute presence and absolute absence. As he points out in *La Voix et le phénomène*, a pure voice without writing (spatialisation, exteriorisation, technicisation) would be at once '*absolument vive et absolument morte'* (*VP*, 115). It is for this reason that Derrida insists instead on the spectrality of the trace, as the mark of an always already abdicated presence and the perpetually deferred promise of its arrival.

This account of *la vie la mort* is reinforced by the analysis of time and space sketched in Derrida's canonical essay, 'La différance' (1968) (*MP*, 1-29), published one year after his reading of Husserl in *La Voix et le phénomène*. In this essay, Derrida persistently thinks the motifs of life, death, and subjectivity in relation to the concept of mastery (*la maîtrise*). For Derrida, mastery is always implicated with the *technē*—an 'external' tool or prosthesis—

[172] In 'La différance' (*MP*, 13), Derrida catalogues a number of these 'substitutions non synonymiques' for *différance*: 'réserve', 'archi-écriture', 'archi-trace', 'espacement', 'supplément', '*pharmakon*'.

which all of his analyses from *La Voix et le phénomène* onwards show is intrinsic to and constitutive of the supposedly pure presence of the subject to itself. This link between technics and mastery, largely allusive or undeveloped in Derrida's earlier texts, occupies a position of central importance in his later reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'; it is critical, we shall see in a moment, to understanding Derrida's reinterpretation of the child's game of *fort-da*.

The notion of the mastery of presence, inseparable from the mastery of *différance*, is already alluded to in the pages of *La Voix et le phénomène*. Here what could be called our anxiety faced with the temporising force of spacing is seen to be mastered through ideality, which Derrida defines as 'le salut ou la maîtrise de la présence dans la répétition' (*VP*, 8). As will become clear, both here and in Chapter 5, Derrida always associates the *technē* with the value of of repetition. In Husserl, the *technē* is already implicated with the *phonē* as the possibility of the objectivity of the ideal object. This is because, as Derrida shows, for all his privileging of the purity of the interior living voice, Husserl is still forced to accept the role played by the technique of writing in the constitution of the *eidos*: an ideality exists only in so far as it is repeated in spatial inscription and is thus passed down from one generation to another (*IOG*, 83-110). Analysing the necessary co-implication of pure speech and impure writing, Derrida argues that 'l'époque de la voix' can only be understood as the 'maîtrise *technique* de l'être-objet'; 'pour bien comprendre l'unité de la *technē* et de la *phonē*, il faut penser l'objectivité de l'objet' (*VP*, 84). This mastery, he continues, constitutes the history of metaphysics as the history of a privilege accorded to the value of presence.

In one sense, this should lead us to conceive mastery as the opposite of *différance*, since it is the unconditional force of the latter which undermines the possibility of mastery in general. As Derrida notes in 'La différance', for instance, foreshadowing his later meditations on sovereignty and politics, *différance* 'n'est pas loin [...] de signaler la mort du dynaste' (*MP*,

4). We must nonetheless be attentive to the subtleties of Derrida's thinking of the spacing of *différance* as a process of simultaneous force *and* inscription. If we define *différance* as the absolute converse of mastery (therefore as the loss of mastery) we risk falling back into the oppositional logic that Derrida's notion is designed to subvert. Instead, *différance* must be interpreted as that which both enables the sense of mastery (as inscription, spatialisation, exteriorisation) *and* that which forecloses the possibility of total mastery (as force, temporisation, delay).

In 'La différance', Derrida underscores this close relationship between *différance* and the phenomenon of mastery. He begins, for example, by insisting that *différance* is neither an active nor a passive movement but instead indicates 'la voix moyenne'.[173] *Différance* is represented here as a kind of *activité passivité* through which any notion of mastery as activity, power, or dominance would be founded on the exclusion of its opposite: passivity. If *différance* occupies a middle-voice between action and inaction, Derrida continues, it is to highlight the way in which 'la philosophie, se constituant en cette répression, a commencé par distribuer [la voix moyenne, une certaine non-transitivité] en voix active et voix passive' (*MP*, 9).

If *différance*, however, signals the death of the master ('dynaste') and mastery is *stricto sensu* impossible, how do we gain any hold over the constant mutability of the 'external' world (for example, in the temporal spacing through which we experience this world)? This paradox relates again to what Derrida calls the 'quasi-transcendental' character of *différance*. According to Derrida's quasi-transcendental logic, already referred to in Chapter 2 (2.ii), *différance* renders something possible at the same time that it renders it impossible. Nowhere is this paradox clearer than in the domain of the subject's consciousness

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[173] 'La différance' in *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie***,** pp. 73-4. Derrida insists on this medial or dual character of *différance* in the questions which followed his original 1968 lecture: '[la différance est] elle-même et son autre, active et passive, transitive et non-transitive' (p.102).

of itself. As we saw in our reading of *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida accounts for subjectivity in terms of the inextricability of temporality and spatiality. In 'La différance', this inextricability again occupies the foreground of his analyses, synopsised in a question he places in its own paragraph: 'différance comme temporisation, différance comme espacement. Comment s'ajointent-elles?' (*VP*, 9). In order to understand this question we must recall Derrida's argument in *La Voix et le phénomène* concerning the need for a 'new' concept of the sign. The sign, he argued, can no longer be seen to 'stand in' for an absent presence. Instead, the sign must be reinstated as the origin of the object it purports to represent. There is no pure, self-present subject which would then come to re-present itself *through* the body of the sign. The body of the sign, rather, is what pre-forms the content it is intended only to convey passively. Consequently, there can be no 'subject' as such without a minimal exteriorisation or spacing, that is, without the exteriority of the *technē*. This means that any mastery over *différance* as temporisation can only be achieved by and through a process of spatialisation. Mastery is thus intrinsically linked to technical inscription, the process through which a mark endures through time and allows consciousness to recall itself to itself. The possibility of absolute mastery, however, is always impossible because the movement of spacing as temporisation, by continually deferring full presence, outdates in advance every supposedly present signified meaning.

If, as we saw above, Derrida associates the *technē* with a series of concepts (prosthetics, spatialisation, exteriorisation, death, inscription) which are supposedly opposed to *physis* (the natural, the psychical, the biological, the living), then the notion of technics will play a crucial role in Derrida's account of subjectivity.[174] Unlike Plato, Derrida conceives technics not as that which is added to 'life', as its secondary derivative or *telos*, but rather as

[174] In line with recent practice, I have adopted the translation 'technics' for the French *la technique*, a word usually been translated in English as 'technology' but which also refers to a 'skill' or 'procedure'. For a general introduction to the problem of technics, 'from Marx to Derrida', see Bradley 2011.

the quasi-transcendental condition for 'life' and the 'natural' in general. The purity of Husserl's inner psychical life, he argues in *La Voix et le phénomène*, is possible only on the basis of the exclusion of writing as exteriority, which Husserl equates with the technical death of meaning and thus with the dangers of miscommunication.[175] In this sense, Derrida's treatment of the *technē* in *La Voix et le phénomène* is continuous with what he also calls 'archi-écriture' or 'inscription': the tracing of a mark that resists the temporising movement of spacing and allows the subject to appear to itself as subject.

iii. Mastering Différance

1. Fort-da

Given the importance of technics in Derrida's thinking of mastery, it is not surprising that a large part of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"' is devoted to a close reading of the child's game of *fort-da*. Earlier in this thesis (2.ii), this famous scene was examined from the point of view of the scientific status of Freud's observation and description of the game. In what follows, I will explore Derrida's interest in the game from the perspective of the '*economic* motive' behind Ernst's repetition compulsion (*SE, XVIII*, 14). Whereas the originality of Freud's interpretation lies in the importance he attaches to a psychical economy of pleasure and unpleasure, Derrida's reading highlights a different type of economy at work in the child's compulsive repetition: life as an economy of death (*la vie la mort*). Derrida's account of the *fort-da* game interprets the scene not in terms of Ernst's growing mastery over the absence of his mother (as per Freud's account), but rather as a scene of writing: a movement of

[175] Although this originary and symbiotic contamination of 'technics' with what it putatively derives from (the natural, the human, the voice, the living, etc.) constitutes the standard interpretation of Derrida's thinking of technics, in the later part of his career he increasingly turns his attention to the diachronic dimension of technics (as I argue in Chapter 5).

heteroaffection in which polarities of spacing and technics, life and death play an intertwined role in the child's constitution and reconstitution of its own identity.[176]

Freud claims that the origin of the game lies in the child's avoidance of the unpleasurable absence of his mother and, by extension, in the pleasure he acquires in gaining mastery over her absence through the symbolic manipulation of the spool. Against this dialectic of pleasure and unpleasure, Derrida interprets the child's compulsion repetition in terms of the logic of autoaffection. That the game should be read in parallel both with Derrida's earlier description of the phenomenological reduction as a 'scène' (in which space, technics, and exteriority are excluded) (*VP*, 96) and with his earlier analysis of the 'scène' of writing in Freud's psychical topography is clear from the theatrical vocabulary that Derrida once again makes use of here. He takes advantage, for instance, of the ambiguity of the French word 'répétition' (meaning both 'repetition' and 'rehearsal') to underscore the performative dimension of the child's game. The child's manipulation of the spool is a matter not just of repetition but of 'la répétition répétée (*andauernd wiederholte Tun*)' (*CP*, 321-2) (*GW*, *XIII*, 11): the rehearsal of repetition or the repetition of rehearsal. What this lexical allusion suggests is that the same gesture involved in Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's 'pure' inner psyche is again at stake here: the demonstration of an irreducible dependency of the psyche on what is supposedly 'exterior' to it (the *technē*).

In this regard, it is important to recall that Freud introduces the game of *fort-da* as just one version of a still more general game. Despite the obvious differences between versions of the game, however, Derrida identifies a common structure in each variant. In each version, the

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[176] Although the *fort-da* game is indispensable to any interpretation of 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', commentators have generally shied away from a close reading of Derrida's analysis of the game. The game itself has most frequently been taken up by critics as exemplifying 'le "rapporté" abyssal [...] entre l'objet ou le contenu' (*CP*, 340) of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, i.e., the way in which the object of Freud's description can itself be folded back on Freud's own text (e.g., the text can itself be read as a game of *fort-da* with the notion of the death drive) (see, for example: Weber 1982; Caruth 1996: 134, n.14; 66-7; Ellmann 2000: 224-5; Smith 2010: 12). What I would like to suggest in what follows, however, is that it is only on the basis of a close attention to Derrida's intricate analysis of the game—one which emphasises the crucial role of spacing, technics, and the drive to mastery—that we then can understand the wider scene of 'abyssal' writing at stake in Freud's game of autobiographical *fort-da*.

child is playing with different technical tool, what Derrida collectively refers to as his 'outils utiles' (*CP*, 332).

Freud introduces the first version of the game as follows:

> This good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business (*SE*, *XVIII*, 14).

In glossing this passage, Derrida draws attention to two phrases in Freud's German. The first refers to the parents' 'hunting for his toys', that is, the action of *Zusammensuchen*, which he translates as 'la recherche en vue de ramasser, le rassemblement' (*CP*, 330). The first part of this first version of the game consists in the child throwing his toys away, producing a space between himself and the objects at hand ('l'opération d'éloignement') (*CP*, 330). This dispersion is followed by a second part which consists 'à rassembler, à chercher pour ramasser, à réunir pour *rendre*' (*CP*, 330). The general structure of the child's game is thus one of dispersal followed by recovery. As Derrida points out, all of the supplementary examples referred to by Freud conform to this common structure.

The second phrase highlighted by Derrida refers to the child's toys, his *Spielzeuges*. While Freud's *Spielzeuges* signify something of the order of leisure ('play things', 'things to play with'), Derrida points out that *Zeug* can also take on a technical and utilitarian sense, as 'l'engin, l'outil, le produit, le machin' (*CP*, 331). His translation of *Spielzeuges* as 'attirail de jeu' (*CP*, 330) emphasises not only the technicity of the game but also its utility. 'Attirail' signifies material or equipment that is put to a particular purpose ('attirail de pêche', for example, refers to 'fishing gear'). Whereas Freud explains this utility with reference to an underlying economic motive, Derrida argues that the child's manipulation of these play objects plays an indispensable role in the construction of his own identity.

The first version of the game described by Freud, then, contains two elements common to each subsequent version: a process of *rassemblement* and the presence of a technical object. As we saw earlier (4.i.2), both of these elements are crucial to Derrida's account of the process of autoaffection. Indeed, Derrida's interpretation of the game as a process of autoaffection is made all but explicit:

> S'il se sépare de son *Spielzeug* comme de lui-même et en vue de se laisser rassembler, c'est qu'il est aussi lui-même un collectif dont le réajointement peut donner lieu à toute une combinatoire des ensembles. [...] Je ne dis pas que Freud le dise. Mais il dira, dans une des deux notes que j'ai annoncées, que c'est bien lui-même ou son image que l'enfant 'joue' aussi à faire apparaître-disparaître. Il est partie de son *Spielzeug* (*CP*, 331).

The child's self-supplementation is not wholly dependent on his 'attirail de jeu', however. The second version of the game of *rassemblement* described by Freud involves a different technical instrument of autoaffection: the child's voice. As in Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's 'voix qui garde le silence', the child's verbal discourse is interpreted here as an action that is irreducibly exteriorising. According to Freud, the child's throwing away of his toys was accompanied by a string of syllables: 'o-o-o-o'. Freud interprets this utterance, in consultation with the child's mother, as an attempt at articulating the German word 'fort' ('gone', *SE*, *XVIII*, 14-15). This supplementary datum allows Freud to form his first hypothesis on the meaning of the game: 'I eventually realized that [...] the only use he made of any of his toys was to play "gone" with them' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15); or in his original German: 'mit ihnen "fortsein" zu spielen' (*GW*, *XIII*, 12), to play with their 'being-far-away'. Derrida interprets this verbal displacement not as a *description* of Ernst's game of *rassemblement* (as Freud does) but rather as *another version* of the same game of dispersal and retrieval. The articulation of the utterance involves the technical inscription of the self in the external world, providing the minimal displacement or spatialisation necessary for autoaffection. This is why

Derrida remarks that the child's use of the word 'fort' produces the effect of a 'proper' name (*CP*, 333).

The introduction of the spool in Freud's analysis signals the third version of the game (conventionally interpreted as the *fort-da* game proper) and provides an 'exemple exemplaire' which proves decisive for Freud's interpretation (*CP*, 330):

> The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. [...] What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'o-o-o-o' ['gone']. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful '*da*' ['there']. This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15) (*GW*, *XIII*, 12).

This version proves decisive for Freud because all previous versions had involved only the first part of the game: the child's action of throwing away his toys while uttering of the word 'fort' (gone). It is only with the introduction of the spool and thus with the addition of the game's second part that the significance of the 'complete game'—one of 'disappearance and return'—becomes clear.

Freud is careful to note, however, that 'as a rule one only witnessed the first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15). He argues that the game reaches its completion only in the yield of pleasure brought about by the presence of the object (and consequently of that which it symbolically represents: the mother). In Derrida's interpretation of the game as a process of autoaffection, however, the possibility of any such 'completion' is always already foreclosed by the temporising movement of spacing. This is because the game's second act, the 'presence' of the object and the yield of pleasure attached to it, is never successful: the pleasure taken in full presence is always postponed because full presence itself is always deferred by spacing as temporisation. This is why Derrida claims that 'la scène est celle d'une supplémentation interminablement répétée, comme si cela n'en finissait pas de se

compléter'; 'il y a comme un axiome d'incomplétude dans la structure de la scène d'écriture' (*CP*, 334). This 'axiome' is the unconditional puncturing of the present by the movement of spacing.

Derrida's use of the word 'véhicule' to describe the spool is significant (*CP*, 336). It alludes both to a strange observation Freud makes in his description of the game ('it never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage', *SE*, *XVIII*, 15) and to the child's self-symbolisation in his game of autoaffection (it is the vector, body, or signifier of his signified self). With regard to the first reference, we saw earlier that it implies an undecidable autobiographical trace inscribed in Freud's supposedly objective analysis (2.ii). But Derrida's use of the word 'véhicule' here also alludes to the intrinsic relationship between the technicity of the vector and the process of spacing. Derrida reasons that if the child had played at the spool being a carriage, then the game would have no longer entailed a process of supplementation. This is because if the piece of wood were pulled along behind him like a train, the string would be held 'continûment à distance [...], à même distance, la longueur du fil restant invariable, la faire (laisser) se déplacer en même temps et au même rythme que soi' (*CP*, 336). In this fictive, counter-factual version of the game, the threat of spacing as temporisation would be eliminated (and with it the need for repetition and return): 'ça n'a même pas à revenir ce train en train, ça ne part pas vraiment' (*CP*, 336). The incalculable risk involved in throwing away the spool, in instituting a space between oneself and one's representation in the technical object (namely, the risk that the object may never return or that it may not return to the 'same' owner who displaced it), would thus be put out of play. In this hypothetical version, the threat of spacing is suppressed or reduced to a calculable distance in which the string remains in a state of constant tautness. Against this theoretical fiction, Derrida argues that every technical inscription always entails an unforeseeable risk of self-difference or alterity.

Derrida's focus on 'la présentation de soi de la re-présentation' (*CP*, 339) involved in the child's game of autoaffection leads him to the final version of the game described by Freud. Freud refers to this version in a footnote, claiming that it fully 'confirmed' his original interpretation (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15, n.). During an absence of several hours on the part of the child's mother, her return was greeted with the words '"Baby o-o-o-o!"': 'the child had found a method of making *himself* disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image "gone"' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 15, n.). In Derrida's reading of this example, the mirror version of the game comes to supplement the spool version which was itself a supplement for a more general game of *rassemblement*. According to Freud's footnote, 'l'enfant joue l'utilité du *fort*/*da* avec quelque chose qui n'est plus un objet-objet, [...] mais avec une bobine supplémentaire de la bobine supplémentaire, avec sa propre "bobine", avec lui-même comme objet-sujet dans le miroir/sans le miroir' (*CP*, 339). In this way, the mirror plays the same structural role in the child's autoaffection as all of the previous technical objects described by Freud (the child's toys, his voice, the spool).[177]

The scene of this mirror-writing provides Derrida with a compelling example of the irreducibility of spatialisation in the subject's mastery of the temporising force of *différance*. For Derrida, autoaffection always involves the production of a moribund technical mark that can endure the vicissitudes of spacing. The trace is thus conceived as a protection or calculation against the incalculability of a future that remains *à venir*. The pleasure or *jouissance* experienced by the child in (re)capturing his own image is in turn associated with this speculative investment (spatialisation) against the perpetual postponement of *différance*. In Freud's interpretation of the mirror version, the child identifies itself with the mother in

[177] Derrida had already highlighted the relationship specular reflection and autoaffection in *La Voix et le phénomène*: 'lorsque je me vois, que ce soit parce qu'une région limitée de mon corps se donne à mon regard ou que ce soit par la réflexion spéculaire, le non-propre est déjà entré dans le champ de cette auto-affection qui dès lors n'est plus pure' (*VP*, 88).

order to master her unpredictable disappearances. While mastery again plays a crucial role in Derrida's account, at stake here is a different type of mastery, the mastery of *différance* (spacing as temporisation) by the subject's technical autoaffection (spacing as spatialisation):

> il se fait disparaître, il se maîtrise symboliquement, il joue avec le mort comme avec soi, et il se fait réapparaître dès lors sans miroir, dans sa disparition même, se maintenant comme sa mère au bout du fil. Il *se* parle téléphoniquement [in his use of the *technē* of verbal discourse], il s'appelle, se rappelle, s'affecte 'spontanément' de sa présence-absence en la présence-absence de la mère (*CP*, 340).

As in Freud's account, however, the notion of binding (*Bindung*) as an economy of death at work within life is central to Derrida's analysis. As we shall see, Derrida defines inscription as a process of binding the temporising force of *différance* and thus of gaining mastery over one's own identity.

2. Binding and Inscription

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud links the mastery of trauma to a process he argues is fundamental to psychical life: binding. According to Freud, binding refers to the function by which psychical energy is linked (or 'bound') to a particular mental representation. As we have seen, Derrida accounts for the mastery of *différance* (and of *différance* as mastery) in broadly similar terms: as the restriction (or spatialisation) of force (temporisation) in a process of inscription. My aim here is to examine some of the ways in which Derrida's account of the technical mastery of *différance* is prefigured in Freud's discussion of the binding of the drives. It is in his hypothesis of a primordial drive towards mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) (*SE*, *XVIII*, 16), I argue, that Freud comes closest to Derrida's treatment of spacing as a process of temporisation and spatialisation. At the same time, however, while Freud might locate this drive for mastery *beyond* the death drive, thereby installing it as the transcendental sovereign of psychical life, Derrida argues that any primordial drive for mastery could only ever possess

a quasi-transcendental mastery over the psychical apparatus. This is because, as we shall see, an originary drive towards mastery could only establish itself as transcendental by delegating its authority to so-called 'component' drives. The pleasure principle, for instance, associated by Freud with the life drives or Eros, can only extend its control over psychical life by temporarily delegating its authority to the reality principle (associated by Freud with the binding of Eros and thus with a function of the death drive). This structure of delegation reproduces the same structure of life as the autoaffection of death that we have been tracing up to now. For Derrida, the mastery of *différance* in a movement of inscription and the simultaneous unseating of this inscription by spacing as temporisation suggests an underlying 'économie *bindinale*' (*CP*, 415) that can be used to explain the series of aporias which threaten the coherence of Freud's theory of binding. This more general economy responds to the logic of autoaffection at stake in Derrida's notion of *la vie la mort*.

In an essay on 'The Unconscious' (1915), Freud remarks that the distinction between excitation in a bound state and excitation in a free-flowing state 'represents the deepest insight we have gained up to the present into the nature of nervous energy' (*SE*, *XIV*, 188). In using the term 'binding', Freud has a highly specialised psychical function in mind. At its most general, binding refers to the arresting of freely circulating psychical energy. In the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, this process plays a key role in the mechanics of psychical trauma. In this chapter, Freud proposes to explain the compulsive repetition of a traumatic memory (for example, in the anxiety dreams of soldiers suffering from shell-shock) through the subject's inability to bind and thus to master a traumatic past experience (*SE*, *XVIII*, 12-17). What proves less certain, however, is the psychical source of this process of binding. In speculating on the origin of binding as a function of the psyche, Freud posits a number of candidates: binding might be a function of the pleasure principle (and its modification the reality principle), or it may operate in service of the compulsion to repeat; it

could also be a function of the death drive, or perhaps, as he discreetly proposes, of a drive that is even more originary than the latter: a drive towards mastery. In this attempt to bind binding to a single psychical source, Freud encounters a series of theoretical difficulties which, as we shall see, Derrida explains not through an inadequacy of rigour on Freud's part but through the 'bindinal' economy of *différance* as autaffection.

In this sense, Freud's discussion of the psychical origin of binding is far more complex than it initially appears. The function of binding, he argues, has a dual function. On the one hand, it consists in mastering the trauma inflicted by too great a stimulus coming from the external world. On the other hand, it designates a process of mastering high amounts of interior stimulus emanating from the drives. According to Freud, these internal excitations predominate over those coming from the external world because the cortical layer has no protection against them, as it does in the case of external stimuli (*SE*, *XVIII*, 34). These drives are defined as 'the representatives of all the forces originating in the interior of the body and transmitted to the mental apparatus—at once the most important and the most obscure element of psychological research' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 34). The impulses arising from the drives, Freud reasons, are probably '*freely mobile* processes which press towards discharge' and are thus in a non-bound state. As is the case for too much external excitation, a failure to bind the excitation of the drives—i.e., in the secondary process, which restricts or 'inhibits' the circulation of the primary process of the drives by attaching or binding its energy to mental representatives—produces a disturbance that is analogous to a traumatic neurosis.

Freud's concept of binding, then, signifies two distinct but related processes: the organism's mastering of too great a stimulus coming from the external world and the mastering of its own internal stimuli (the drives) by linking these excitations to particular

psychical ideas.[178] The relationship between the interior and exterior forms of binding can be illustrated with reference to the *fort-da* game. According to Freud's theory of binding, the child's manipulation of the spool involves the tying up of his own libido. Since the satisfaction of this libido is frustrated by the absence of the mother, the child binds the circulation of this drive to a different ideational representative, in this case, the symbolic spool. This re-binding of the drive allows the child to gain mastery over the trauma of his mother's absence and thereby avoid, in so far as possible, the unpleasure associated with her absence. This explains Freud's suggestion that binding may function as a preliminary process for the successful operation of the pleasure principle and the reality principle: the game involves a yield of pleasure for the child and the proof of his mastery of his situation of passivity is that he does not cry following his mother's death (SE, *XV*, 16, n.1).

As Derrida points out, however, despite the apparent neatness of this model, the theoretical position occupied by binding in Freud's model of the psyche is highly ambivalent. Freud is unable to decide, for instance, if the process of binding is in the service of the pleasure principle or if the function of binding in fact takes precedence over the pursuit of pleasure. He seems dissatisfied with the conclusion that it is only after the function of binding has been successful that the pleasure and reality principles can can proceed unhindered (*SE*, *XVIII*, 35). This dissatisfaction eventually leads Freud to an ambiguous formulation. Until the pleasure principle assumes control of psychical life, he claims, 'the task of mastering or binding excitation [has] precedence—not, indeed, in *opposition* to the pleasure principle, but independently of it and to some extent in disregard of it' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 35).

Derrida is fascinated by Freud's use of the word 'independently' here. Although Freud argues that the independent function of binding could potentially transcend the pleasure

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[178] The German *Bindung* captures this sense of binding cathectic energy to an idea, since it implies both a sense of 'attachment' (to an idea) and 'restriction' (of the primary processes, of external excitation). Although Derrida's translation, *la liaison*, captures both senses of constriction (*lier*, to tie) and association (*lier*, to link), this dual meaning is not immediately clear from the English 'binding' and should be borne in mind in what follows.

principle, Derrida reasons that Freud's use of the word 'independently' here signals a quasi-transcendental relation between binding and the pleasure principle. This contradictory relation is aporetic because it suggests 'un rapport sur le mode du non-rapport' (*CP*, 418). Indeed, Derrida argues that the concept of binding itself occupies a site of repeated aporia in Freud's argument. Freud is reluctant, for instance, to decide which psychical process or agency is anterior to which: the free circulation of the drive-impulse or the binding that supposedly restricts it. To resolve this difficulty, Freud distinguishes between a 'primary' psychical process (the freely mobile cathexis of the drives) and a 'secondary' process (the constraint of this excitation obtaining in normal life) (*SE*, *SVIII*, 62). Nevertheless, the concept of binding proves intransigent to this distinction between primary and secondary processes. If, as Derrida argues, binding refers to a function of preliminary restriction of the primary process (the force of the drive is bound to a psychical representation) *and* to the later replacement of the primary process by the secondary process, then it is simultaneously a function of the primary *and* the secondary processes (*CP*, 420). At the same time, Freud treats the idea of a drive that is in an unrestricted state of free-flow and therefore outside the influence of binding as a kind of useful fiction or thought experiment. As early as *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for example, Freud claims that the distinction between the primary and secondary processes is only a 'theoretical fiction' (*SE*, *V*, 603), albeit a useful one. What Freud implies here is that the presence of 'pure' psychical force (cathexis) would be just as fictional as 'pure' psychical form (breaching, inscription, spatialisation of memory). For Derrida, this means that if there were ever total liberation of the drives there would be only pure force, no inhibition by the reality principle (which always works to ensure the organism's survival), and therefore death: 'décharge absolute, débandable, néant ou mort' (*CP*, 428). At the same time, if there were total restriction of the drives there could no 'life' because there would be no desire for survival or the passing on of a genetic trace. Life, the pursuit of pleasure, is thus only possible

for Freud, Derrida claims, on the basis of an *economy* of death (restriction, inhibition, binding). Death does not supervene at the end of life, as *apallagē*, but is rather interior to and constitutive of 'life' in general.

Derrida's thinking of *différance* as an economy of life and death, as an 'économie bindinale', can thus clarify the aporetic position of binding within Freud's larger psychical apparatus. In attempting to establish the psychical origin of binding, Freud is obliged to fall back on a theoretical fiction, namely, a distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' processes. As Derrida shows in his reading of Freud's hypothesis of a drive towards mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*), however, the imposition of any transcendental origin is itself always a kind of ideal fiction. This is because, Derrida argues, every origin is always already contaminated and constituted by its relationship to what derives from it. The function of binding can only be posited as dominant over psychical life through a process of autoaffection, through the delegation of its authority to a plenipotentiary: for example, the pleasure principle. Although binding supposedly precedes the work of the pleasure principle, it also aims, Freud later argues, at the production of pleasure: 'the binding of a drive impulse would be a preliminary function designed to prepare the excitation for its final elimination in the pleasure of discharge' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 62). In this sense, paradoxically, the aim of the process of binding is unbinding: the discharge of excitation. In inscribing the function of binding to one psychical locality, in setting it in op-position to a number of other psychical functions, Freud is also attempting to bind or master the autoaffective stucture of *différance*. His failure to achieve this mastery is legible in the aporetic status of the concept of binding within his text, a situation which also threatens Freud's hypothesis of an originary drive towards mastery.

3. Mastery

The potential existence of a drive towards mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) is tentatively raised by Freud during his discussion of the *fort-da* game. Having established the role of binding in the child's libidinal desire for his mother, Freud speculates that the child's attempts to bind this trauma through repetition originate in a drive towards mastery that may be more originary than the pleasure principle. This hypothetical drive to mastery would be 'beyond' the pleasure principle and would perhaps be even more originary than the death drive (and thus 'beyond' the beyond of the pleasure principle).

The existence this drive is implied by the vocabulary of activity-passivity that structures Freud's description of the child's game. According to Freud, we saw, the child plays with the spool in order to acquire a degree of psychical compensation for the absence of his mother:

> On an unprejudiced view one gets the impression that the child turned his experience into a game from another motive. At the outset he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to a drive for mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not (*SE*, *XVIII*, 16) (*GW*, *XIII*, 14).

The child attempts to find satisfaction in the active assumption of the game, in a situation which would otherwise be one of total passivity. Derrida points out that Freud's hypothesis of a *Bemächtigungstrieb* ('pulsion de maîtrise') here is unique because it is the first possibility of a 'beyond' of the pleasure principle that is not rejected outright (*CP*, 346); indeed, Freud

leaves the hypothesis of a drive to mastery suspended, proposing instead to substitute another possible theoretical framework ('but still another interpretation may be attempted').[179]

For Derrida, Freud's account of the relationship between binding and the satisfaction of a drive towards mastery anticipates, in several respects, his own thinking of positional binding (inscription) as a form of mastery over the temporising force of *différance*. At the same time, however, Freud's discussion of this hypothetical and primordial drive involves a series of theoretical problems which Freud is both unwilling and unable to resolve. This unwillingness explains, for Derrida, the 'bizarrement effacé' (CP, 346) position of the drive within the larger framework of Freud's text.

According to Derrida, the possibility of a drive towards mastery implies 'la singularité d'une pulsion qui ne se laisserait réduire à aucune autre' (*CP*, 430). As he argues, 'si une telle pulsion de pouvoir existe, si elle se voit reconnaître une spécificité, il faut bien admettre qu'elle joue un rôle très original dans l'organisation la plus "méta-conceptuelle" et "métalinguistique", la plus "dominante" précisement du discours freudien' (*CP*, 431). It plays a critical role at the meta-linguistic level of Freud's text because, as we have seen, Freud's speculative argument in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is suffused with a rhetoric of mastery. Freud repeatedly poses the question, for example, of which psychical agency (*Instanz*) is in control of psychical life, or what mental process could be more dominant than the pleasure principle or its 'servant', the reality principle. At a meta-conceptual level, the hypothetical drive for mastery is crucial because such a drive would by definition assume a transcendental mastery over the entire psychical apparatus. It would be at the source of all other drives and thus sovereign over all drive impulses. This is because the success of every drive would be

[179] Derrida refers to Freud's hypothetical *Bemächtigungstrieb* at several points in his later work, although the fundaments of his reading remain consistent with his account of the drive in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'. Freud's hypothesis of 'une pulsion de pouvoir ou une pulsion de maîtrise' is alluded to, for example, in Derrida's discussion of Foucault's account of power and pleasure in *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (*R*, 145). Later, in *Etats d'âme de la psychanalyse* (2000), Derrida associates the drive for mastery with the irreducibility of violence and investigates the possibility of a psychoanalytic thinking of a 'beyond' of this cruel drive for mastery (i.e., *différance* as temporisation).

dependent on a preliminary process of mastery or binding, on the association of excitation with a particular psychical representative.

If every drive, however, were ultimately in service of this ur-drive for mastery, or in Freud's terms, if every drive were a 'component drive' (*Partialtrieb*) of a more general *Bemächtigungstrieb*, then the drive for mastery would paradoxically be at the mercy of each and every drive. It could not occupy a transcendental position at the origin of psychical life, as Freud implies; for Derrida, it could only assume a quasi-transcendental role because its mastery would only be possible through the delegation of its authority to other drives. The drive for mastery would thus become a component drive of drives that are supposedly components of it: 'elle semble avoir part à toutes les autres dans la mesure où toute l'économie du PP [the pleasure principle] et de son au-delà se règle sur des rapports de "maîtrise"' (*CP*, 430). Just as the dominance of the pleasure principle is dependent on the delegation of its authority to the reality principle (a delegation which aims at assuring a higher yield of pleasure in the future and thus the eventual dominance of the pleasure principle), the drive for mastery delegates its authority to the function of binding with the aim of recouping and expanding its control. At the same time, however, by investing power in the function of binding, the drive for mastery suspends its mastery by becoming enthralled to the pleasure principle, by submitting itself to the caprices of the latter. If the function of binding fails, then the drive for mastery fails with it.

Derrida alludes to this constitutive delegation of power when he claims that 'le pouvoir s'exerce selon le réseau des postes' (*CP*, 431). Against the supposed transcendental dominance of the pleasure principle over psychical life, he invokes his own quasi-transcendental notion of 'le principe postal' (*CP*, 172). According to the heteroaffective logic of this postal principle, every principle (or sovereign) can only establish itself by delegating its authority to an 'other'. Playing on the ambiguity of the French word 'poste', Derrida

argues that the post (position, role) of sovereign can only be exercised on the basis of a posting of its own mastery, through an act of inscription or delegation. In doing so, however, the sovereign invests its authority outside itself, thus running the risk of failure and of its own destruction. Hence Derrida's claim here, alluding to his account of spacing as a process of simultaneous enthroning (spatialisation) and unseating (temporisation) of power, that 'c'est à la fois la raison et l'échec, l'origine et la limite du pouvoir' (*CP*, 432). This duality of power and powerlessness signalled by the notion of autoaffection also characterises, we saw, the child's game of *fort-da*. The child 'affects' himself by inscribing himself in the 'external' world through a process of technical inscription. In terms of the postal principle: he posts himself to himself through the technical inscription of the postcard, thereby undergoing the technical detour of his own death in writing. Like the pleasure principle, the child's self-identity is possible only through a structural relationship to alterity, in this case the alterity introduced by technical inscription into the supposedly self-identical, living psyche. This quasi-transcendental structure explains the aporetic nature of Freud's speculative procedure in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, particularly as it concerns the concept of binding. The inconsistencies which threaten to undermine Freud's discussion stem from his attempt to establish a single, transcendental sovereign of psychical life. For Derrida, Freud fails to recognise that any establishment of a 'pure' origin of psychical life is always dependent on a relationship of difference, otherness, and dependency.

Freud's hypothesis of a transcendental drive towards mastery in turn implies that psychical mastery is the origin of all other 'derivative' forms of mastery, for example, political or technoscientific mastery. This is because, as Derrida argues, the latter types of mastery are possible only once the psychical subject has achieved mastery over its own drives and over the external stimulus coming from the outside world (*CP*, 419). In his deconstruction of Freud's account of this transcendental origin of mastery, Derrida shows how the purity of

psychical mastery is always dependent on supposedly exterior or derivative forms of mastery. 'If it is really the case that seeking to restore an earlier state of things is such a universal characteristic of the drives,' Freud writes in the final chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 'we need not be surprised that so many processes take place in mental life independently of the pleasure principle' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 62). As I suggested earlier, Freud's use of the word 'independently' here proves problematic for his attempt to establish the primariness of psychical mastery. At stake here is the particularity of the relationship between the pleasure principle and the drives; for Derrida, the precise nature of this relationship remains unresolved in Freud's text. He cites Freud's conclusion that 'notre problème [notre tâche, *Aufgabe*] demeure irrésolu (*ungelöst*)' (*CP*, 419); 'we still have to resolve the problem of the relation of the processes of repetition of the drives to the dominance [*Herrschaft*: mastery] of the pleasure principle' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 62). On the contrary, as we saw, Derrida argues that the nature of this relationship is defined by a postal principle: the pleasure principle relates to the drives through a process of autoaffection or constitutive delegation; it can only 'appear' as a self-identical drive through a relationship of difference to other drives, to other psychical components. At the same time, this relationship of dependency undermines Freud's attempt to establish the pleasure principle as the transcendental sovereign of psychical life.

It is because Freud is searching for the origin of psychical *Herrschaft* ('pouvoir, maîtrise, empire'), one that extends its transcendental dominance over *all* of the psychical domain, that his discourse on mastery implies the 'literal' or 'proper' source of all derivatives forms of mastery. As Derrida claims, 'c'est à partir de la maîtrise exercée par ce qu'on appelle ici le PP [pleasure principle] sur tout sujet psychique (sur tout vivant, conscient ou inconscient) qu'on peut ensuite déterminer quelque maîtrise que ce soit, par figure ou dérivation' (*CP*, 419). All other forms of mastery would be predicated on Freud's concept of super-transcendental psychical mastery: 'de cette maîtrise "psychique" serait ainsi dérivée la

maîtrise au sens dit courant, usuel ou littéral, voire propre, dans les "domaines" de la technique ou de l'expertise, de la politique ou de la lutte entre les consciences' (*CP*, 419).[180] As with the relationship between the drive towards mastery and all other so-called component drives, all 'derivative' forms of mastery are possible only on the basis of psychical mastery as their transcendental predicate. There can be no political subjugation without subjects who have first mastered and are in control of their own psychical economy ('toutes ces maîtrises en appellent au sujet ou à la conscience') (*CP*, 419). As Derrida shows, however, Freud's thinking of a principle of psychical mastery as originary is possible only on the basis of technical supplementation. The pure interiority of psychical mastery can be grasped only with reference to a minimal exteriority of the *technē*. Freud can only posit and understand psychical mastery through a figural vocabulary drawn from the domain of political sovereignty: what agency (*Instanz:* in the sense of 'court of last appeal'), Freud asks, has mastery (*Herrschaft*: lordship, sovereignty) over psychical life? Is the pleasure principle in the service of (*im Dienste*) the death drive or is the reality principle merely the delegate or representative of the pleasure principle? (*CP*, 421).

In a similar way, Derrida points out, Freud's representation of the psyche as a map of hierarchical positions (as a 'carte postale') is indebted to terminological borrowings from the realm of technoscience. Returning to his discussion of the interdependency of the natural *psychē* and the supposedly derivative *technē* in *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida argues that Freud's discussion of the psychical apparatus ('appareil') is itself dependent on figures drawn from the mechanical realm. Freud speaks, for example, of binding as a mechanical function (*Funktion*) of the psyche. Much of the language surrounding Freud's discussion of binding, Derrida shows, draws on figures of technicity and instrumentality: binding (*binden*) involves

[180] Derrida's discussion of the relationship between psychical mastery and other 'derivative' forms of mastery, notably those of technoscience and politics, will be important for Chapter 5 of this thesis, which explores the role of psychoanalytic concepts in Derrida's political writings.

an ‘opération qui consiste à lier, enchaîner, ligoter, garrotter, serrer, bander’ (*CP*, 420). It is important to note here, however, that Derrida is not criticising Freud for an unreflective transference of these technological figures into ‘le domaine psycho-biologique’ (*CP*, 420). Indeed, Derrida’s claim is much more radical: each realm (the natural and the unnatural, the psychical and the technical, the living and the dead) is always already contaminated by its other, according to the logic of autoaffection outlined throughout this chapter.

In drawing attention to an underlying connection between the process of psychical mastery, repetition, and the binding of force to a determined spatial location, Freud prefigures Derrida’s account of inscription as the possibility of mastering the temporising force of *différance*. At the same time, however, Freud’s hypothesis of a drive towards mastery is predicated on a thinking of psychical mastery as a pure, original, and transcendental form of mastery. By highlighting the role of autoaffection in both the content (the *fort-da* game) and form of Freud’s text (the ‘postal’ principle undermining the borders between psychical sovereigns), Derrida shows how the purity of an origin (the psyche, life, nature) is in fact always dependent on its secondary derivative (the *technē*, death, prosthetics). In doing so, he demonstrates that the sovereignty of a primary origin can only be established by deferring (in the political sense) to what is secondary to it. The true ‘beyond’ (*jenseits*) of the pleasure principle is in this sense not a more authoritative death drive or originary function of binding, but rather *différance* as the ‘other side’ (*jenseits*) of the pleasure principle: the minimal self-difference required for it to establish itself as sovereign but which, in the same stroke, undermines its self-same sovereignty.

As we shall see in the final chapter of this thesis, Derrida does not abandon *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a theoretical resource after ‘Spéculer—sur “Freud”’. On the contrary, the indications he offers in this text concerning the relationship between political and technoscientific mastery and a more ‘originary’ form of psychical mastery are taken up again,

two decades later, in his response to the events of September 11. In his post-9/11 writings on politics, Derrida turns to a key psychoanalytic concept that has thus far been neglected in this thesis: the concept of trauma.

5

Derrida's 9/11
Politics of the Unconscious

Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *Fooled by Randomness*: *The Hidden Role of Chance in Life and in the Markets* (2001) became an unexpected bestseller in the months following September 11. No doubt buoyed by public perceptions of a newly fragile global politics, Taleb's book set out to rehabilitate randomness in a culture obsessed with prediction and *après coup* rationalisation. In a 2007 sequel, Taleb illustrated his new 'Black Swan theory' with reference to the terrorist attacks of September 11. A Black Swan event such as 9/11, he claims, 'lies outside the realm of regular expectations'; 'nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility'.[181] According to Taleb's argument,

> had the risk been reasonably conceivable on September 10, it would not have happened. If such a possibility were deemed worthy of attention, fighter planes would have circled the sky above the twin towers, airplanes would have had locked bulletproof doors, and the attack would not have taken place, period.[182]

In an earlier article in the *New York Times* ('Learning to Expect the Unexpected'), Taleb used this 'Black Swan logic' to attack the 'flawed mandate' of the 9/11 Commission, which sought 'to provide a full and complete account of the events of Sept. 11, 2001'. Instead of wallowing in the hindsight of commissions and enquiries, Taleb argued, we must learn what 'general lessons' can be gleaned from the unforeseeability of Black Swan events such as 9/11 and move on with our lives.[183]

At first blush, Taleb's 'Black Swan event' appears to figure a kind of unspeakable monstrosity, one lying entirely outside the realm of prediction and foreseeability. A closer

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[181] Taleb 2007: xviii.

[182] Taleb 2007: xix.

[183] Taleb 2004.

reading, however, reveals that Taleb's Black Swan is not as wholly incalculable as it at first appears. Indeed, Taleb's study is predicated not only on the inherent calculability of a Black Swan event such as 9/11 but also on the possibility of *capitalising* on this calculability: 'Black Swans being unpredictable,' he writes, 'we need to adjust to their existence [...]. Among many other benefits, you can set yourself up to collect serendipitous Black Swans (of the positive kind) by maximizing your exposure to them'.[184]

In contrast to Taleb's insistence on the calculability of Black Swans, Derrida's concept of the *à venir* signals the absolute incalculability of a future withdrawn from any protentive movement of the trace.[185] As we have seen, the trace as inscription, as capitalisation or calculation of the future, is continually unseated by the unforeseeability of a future that will always remain *à venir*. The temporising movement of spacing ensures that the meaning of the past and the present are always provisional, that is, always vulnerable to reinterpretation in future contexts which are themselves structurally incalculable. The metaphor of sight plays an important role in Derrida's discussion of this incalculability. In a pre-9/11 interview entitled 'Passages—du traumatisme à la promesse' (1990), Derrida underscores the link between the incalculable, the unforeseeable, and the terrifying:

> dès qu'on perçoit un monstre dans un monstre, on commence à le domestiquer, on commence, à cause du 'comme tel',—c'est un monstre *comme* monstre—, à le comparer aux normes, à l'analyser, par conséquent, à maîtriser ce que cette figure du monstre pouvait avoir de terrifiant. [...] Si monstrueux que soient des événements ou des textes, à partir du moment où ils entrent dans la culture, le mouvement d'acculturation justement, de domestication, de normalisation, a déjà commencé. On commence à répéter le traumatisme qu'est la perception du monstre (*PS*, 400).

For Derrida, it is the incalculability of an event which renders it traumatic. By framing this incalculability within a wider theory of 'black swan logic', Taleb's account already foresees

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[184] Taleb 2007: xx-xxi.

[185] In *Politiques de l'amitié*, Kant's use of the figure of the *cygnus atratus* to describe true friendship is interpreted by Derrida as an incalculable and unconscious autobiographical residue; in Kant's text, he claims, 'l'apparition d'un certain *cygne noir* [...] donne à lire un inconscient' (*PA*, 288). On the relationship between chance, necessity, and the autobiographical in Derrida's work, see Smith 1996: 12-29.

and domesticates the monstrosity of the event itself. In doing so, his theory tries to master, through the calculating repetition of the trace, what is for Derrida by its nature unmasterable: the absolute unforeseeability of the *à venir*.

Given this association of incalculability, unconscious fear, and the phenomenon of trauma, it is not surprising that psychoanalysis plays such a critical role in Derrida's reflections on 9/11 and in his political writings more generally. Although in recent years much scholarly attention has focussed on determining the precise point of a 'political turn' in Derrida's work,[186] one aspect of his later political writings has remained obscure: his use of psychoanalytical concepts to describe the situation of politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is particularly evident, as we shall see, in Derrida's response to the terrorist attacks of September 11. Two major post-9/11 texts—*Voyous* (2003) and an earlier lengthy interview with Giovanna Borradori in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre: Dialogues à New York (octobre-decembre 2001*)—not only frequently invoke psychoanalytic concepts but are explicit in their reference to the utility of psychoanalytic theory in understanding political discourse in a post-9/11 world. In *Voyous*, for instance, in a passage probing the relationship between his own concept of 'auto-immunité' and the Freudian death drive, Derrida speaks of psychoanalysis as a 'ressource' and a 'réserve': 'ce que les psychanalystes appellent plus ou moins tranquillement l'inconscient reste, me semble-t-il, un des ressorts privilégiés, une des réserves vitallement mortelles, mortellement vitale pour cette implacable loi de la conservation auto-destructrice du "sujet"' (*V*, 83). Nevertheless, as we have seen throughout this thesis, Derrida's insistence on the resourcefulness of psychoanalysis must not be read as an invocation of a straightforward return to the letter of Freud's work. As we saw in our reading of *Mal d'archive* (Chapter 3), Derrida's relationship to Freud always consists in a dual

[186] For advocates of a 'turn' in Derrida's thinking, see Critchley 1999; Mouffe 1996; Rapaport 2002. The notion of an underlying consistency in Derrida's work has been convincingly argued by Hägglund 2008.

movement of turning back (*retourner*) and turning away (*détourner*). This structural ambivalence towards Freud's writings is again evident in Derrida's post-9/11 writings.

Within the growing body of scholarly responses to the events of 9/11, a small but significant number of studies deploy psychoanalytic frameworks to understand the psychological and political implications of the terrorist attacks.[187] In the by now numerous studies of Derrida's political work, however, there has been little sustained attempt at understanding the importance of psychoanalysis in his approach to political phenomena such as globalisation, terrorism, and the question of national and international sovereignty.[188] With the aim of redressing this imbalance, this chapter will trace Derrida's engagement with Freud's work in two of his major political texts: *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre.* In both of these texts, as we shall see, Derrida repeatedly stresses the necessity 'de *compter* avec la logique de l'inconscient' (*V*, 215, my emphasis).[189] His use of the figure of counting and calculability here is crucial. As I will show, in these texts Derrida returns time and again to an inherent relationship between the incalculability of the future, our experience of fear, and the

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[187] See e.g. Covington 2002; Calcelmo 2003; Coates 2003. Although it evinces a number of affinities with Derrida's response to the attacks, Žižek 2002 was published some time after Derrida's dialogue with Borradori in New York.

[188] McQuillan 2009 mobilises the conclusions of Derrida's post-9/11 texts in reflecting on the state of international terrorism in the period since his death. Neither McQuillan nor Richard Beardsworth (1996), however, attend to recurring psychoanalytic allusions in Derrida's political writings. Similarly, the radical nature of the psychoanalytic understanding of temporality is absent from a recent collection of essays on Derrida's thinking of the time of politics (Cheah and Guerlac 2009).

[189] This is not to suggest that psychoanalytic motifs are absent from Derrida's pre-9/11 political writings. Derrida's most ostensibly political text, *Spectres de Marx* (1993), for example, is saturated with the vocabulary of psychoanalysis: 'ce traumatisme n'en finit pas d'être dénié par le mouvement même qui tente de l'amortir, de l'assimiler, de l'intérioriser et de l'incorporer. Sans ce travail du deuil en cours, dans cette tâche interminable, le fantôme reste ce qui donne le plus à penser—et à faire' (*SM*, 162). Indeed, towards the end of the text, Derrida calls for a parallel reading of *The Communist Manifesto* and Freud's 'The Uncanny', proposing to re-title his text '*Marx—das Unheimliche*' (*SM*, 276). In his response ('Marx & Sons') to the debate surrounding the publication of *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida argues for the necessity of a confrontation between psychoanalytic and political themes. Noting that the figures of mourning and inheritance are critical for 'l'analyse du champ politico-fantasmatique de la scène mondiale après la prétendue fin du communisme et ladite "mort de Marx",' he points out that these two concepts 'me permettent aussi d'introduire de façon nécessaire des questions de type psychanalytique (celle du spectre ou du *phantasma*—qui se signifie aussi spectre en grec) dans un champ politique—ce que les "marxistes" ont rarement réussi à faire de façon à mes yeux rigoureuse et convaincante. *Cela supposait de ma part une transformation de cette logique psychanalytique elle-même, justement au sujet du deuil, du narcissisme et du fétichisme*' (*MS*, 46-7, my italics). Derrida later remarks that critical responses to his writings on politics have generally been blind to their psychoanalytic references: 'il faut sans doute élaborer et mobiliser ici une autre problématique. [...] Celle qui, articulant psychanalyse et politique d'une nouvelle façon—*ce que ne font aucun de ceux qui me répondent dans ce livre-ci*—, prend en compte l'expérience de la mort et du deuil, et donc de la spectralisation. (Dois-je rappeler que mon livre va dans cette direction?)' (*MS*, 59, my italics).

problem of psychical trauma—a relationship critical to Freud's discussion of *Angst* (anxiety) and *Schreck* (fright) in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

In this final chapter, then, I will explore a number of psychoanalytic themes articulated by Derrida in his post-9/11 writings. I begin with Derrida's analysis of the notion of 'terror', examining how his account of terror both parallels and diverges from Freud's description of the role of anxiety and fright in traumatic neurosis. I then consider Derrida's reworking of Freud's theory of trauma according to the logic of *différance*, showing how Derrida shifts the terms of the debate by moving away from a model of the compulsive repetition of a past 'event' towards an understanding of trauma based on the unforeseeability of future threats (the *à venir*). The importance of Freud's concept of 'projection' is treated in the third section, examined through the lens of what Derrida calls 'auto-immunité', the process by which a given corpus simultaneously constitutes and de-constitutes its own identity. Finally, I return to the question of the *technē* posed in the previous chapter and examine the intrinsic connection Derrida sees between the compulsive repetition of 'presence' and themes of calculability, technoscience, and the legacy of Enlightenment ideals of scientific progress. Underlying the diversity of these analyses is a structure common to many of Derrida's psychoanalytic references in his post-9/11 work: the transposition of motifs drawn from Freud's theory of psychical defence mechanisms onto the realm of political mechanisms of defence, the means by which sovereign nation states attempt to preserve and maximise their power through increasingly sophisticated technical *savoir*.

i. From Anxiety to Terror

Derrida's earliest response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 was given in an interview with the philosopher Giovanna Borradori in New York, just five weeks after the collapse of the Twin

Towers (*C*, 133-96). It is not until relatively late in the interview that Borradori poses a question which became a common one in the weeks and months following the attacks: 'où étiez vous le 11 septembre?' (*C*, 164). For Derrida, the question itself (recalling the trauma of another key date: the Kennedy assassination) conceals a number of metaphysical presuppositions. These presuppositions relate to what Derrida will go on to call the 'eventness' of the event: its occurrence in a spatial and temporal present. As we have seen throughout this thesis, Derrida associates a determined spatialisation ('Où étiez vous') and punctual temporalisation ('11 septembre') with the privilege accorded to the value of presence in Western culture. This privilege, he claims, is legible in the apparent innocuousness of Borradori's question. In his response, Derrida recalls that he was seated in a café in Shanghai, 'à la fin d'un long voyage en Chine' (*C*, 164), when he first heard the news that a plane had hit the Twin Towers. Describing his rush back to his hotel to watch the events unfold on international news channels, Derrida underscores the imbrication of visuality, presence, and truth in our understanding of the significance of the attacks. It was not until he personally witnessed the televised images, he recalls, that he realised the enormity of the events transpiring: 'dès les premières images télévisées [...] il était facile de *prévoir* que cela allait devenir, aux *yeux* du monde, ce que vous appelé un "événement majeur". Même si ce qui devait suivre restait, dans une certaine mesure, *invisible* et *imprévisible*' (*C*, 164, my emphasis).

Derrida's recollection compresses a number of themes at work in his philosophical treatment of the terrorist attacks. Two motifs of his description are critical for the reading I propose in this chapter. Firstly, like Taleb, Derrida stresses the importance we place on notions of expectation, calculation, and predictability in our understanding of the events of September 11 ('il était facile de prévoir que...'). On the other hand, he points out that this witnessing was haunted by a certain unforeseeability (the immediate future remained

'invisible', 'imprévisible'). The apparently contradictory character of these two observations reflects what I have argued is an irreducible double bind at work in Derrida's theory of the trace: the endurance of a mark is always constituted by a movement of calculation against the future (the mark is traced *for* the future) *and* the threat of an unforeseeable *à venir* in which this mark might be interpreted otherwise.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Derrida equates the inscription of a technical mark with the desire for mastery. In the current chapter, I will develop this analysis and suggest a number of ways in which Derrida's theory of the dual-structured trace is imbricated with Freud's account of the affects of 'fear', 'fright', and 'anxiety' in of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* As we shall see, reference to Freud's discussion of these categories of fear is essential to understanding Derrida's discussion of the conceptual interdependency of terrorism (*terrorisme*), terror (*terreur*), territory (*territoire*), and what he calls 'la terrifiante logique auto-immunitaire' (*C*, 151).

1. Fear, Fright, Anxiety

The second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is one of the most widely cited in Freud's corpus. While the chapter contains Freud's famous description of the *fort-da* game (already discussed at 2.ii and 4.iii.1), it also includes his reflections on the violence of the Great War and on the origins of traumatic war neurosis ('shellshock'). In the case of the latter, critical to Freud's account is the argument that soldiers' experiences during the First World War had disproved contemporary theories of 'traumatic neurosis', a term used to describe pathological conditions (compulsive behaviour, the repetition of anxiety dreams, etc.) occurring among patients who had suffered severe mechanical concussions (such as a railway accident or bomb explosion). This 'mechanical theory', Freud notes, tries to forge a causal link between a patient's trauma and the physical lesions left by an intense mechanical force

(*SE*, *XVIII*, 12). In rejecting this correlation, Freud rejects any aetiological model of trauma based on the physical localisation of the wound. Instead, he proposes that a traumatic neurosis is caused by a *psychical* lesion, that is, by a scar left in the virtual topography of the mind. In making this claim, Freud aims at explaining the origin of both war- and peace-time traumatic neuroses. He does this by arguing that the 'chief weight of causation' lies with the 'factor of surprise, of fright (*Schreck*)' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 12).

Before he can address his virtual theory of trauma, however, Freud must surmount a linguistic difficulty. He points out that there is a great deal of confusion in the way we commonly refer to affects of fear. In particular, three separate German words—*Schreck*, *Furcht*, and *Angst* ('fright', 'fear', and 'anxiety')—are frequently used as interchangeable synonyms, when in actual fact each refers to a specific type of apprehension. *Schreck* (fright) refers to the psychical quality experienced when an individual encounters a danger without being prepared for it in any way; fear (*Furcht*), on the contrary, requires a definite object to instill fearfulness in the individual; and the notion of anxiety (*Angst*) describes 'a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 12).

Freud's emphasis here on a dialectic of foreseeability and unforeseeability prefigures in several key respects Derrida's account of the dual structure of the trace. Unlike Derrida, however, Freud introduces a strict theoretical opposition between knowing anxiety and unknowing fright. He thus rejects the possibility that 'anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis' and instead emphasises the factor of the unknown as the common and decisive factor in all cases of traumatic neurosis. Anxiety, Freud maintains, is always successful; there is 'something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 13).

Later in the text, Freud elaborates on the link between anxiety, fright, and trauma by suggesting that what is ultimately decisive in the aetiology of trauma is the question of quantity. The 'common traumatic neurosis', he maintains, 'is a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield [i.e. the sense-organs of organisms designed to filter dangerous external excitations] against stimuli' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 31). Unlike the early mechanical theory, which regards 'direct damage done to the molecular [...] or even [...] histological structure' of the nervous system as the principal aetiological factor, psychoanalysis aims to understand 'the effects produced on the organ of the mind by the breach in the shield against stimuli' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 31). The concepts of anxiety and fright are crucial to understanding the mechanism of this process. Fright results, we saw, from the 'lack of any preparedness for anxiety', while anxiety, in turn, corresponds to the hyper-cathexis (*Überbesetzung*) of the systems 'that would be the first to receive the stimulus' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 31) (*GW*, *XIII*, 32). Freud argues that when an individual is in a state of unpreparedness (when he or she is not exhibiting 'anxiety'), the relevant psychical systems are not cathected to a high enough degree; there is therefore an insufficient supply of energy to bind and master the energy flowing in from the breach in the protective shield. The emphasis Freud places on a quantitative explanation of anxiety here is key. In the case of a considerable number of traumas, he remarks, it is clear that the difference in the levels of cathexis of psychical systems predetermines whether the outcome will be traumatic or not. It does not matter whether this level can or cannot be calculated by current scientific methods, what matters is that the quantity of investment of these psychic systems remains in principle calculable (*SE*, *XVIII*, 32). Having laid down the fundaments of his virtual and quantitative theory of trauma, Freud applies this theory to available empirical data: traumatic dreams. According to Freud, such dreams 'are endeavouring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 32).

The traumatic character of the events of 9/11 provides Derrida, in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* and *Voyous*, with a striking example of the way in which the classical theory of trauma—exemplified by the mechanical theory but also at work in the quantifying aspirations of Freud's psychical theory—influences our current thinking of terrorism. In these texts, I argue, Derrida interrogates Freud's account of the causal link between quantity of excitation and trauma by highlighting the aporias which result from thinking the trauma of warfare and terrorism according to a logic of calculability and quantification.

2. Terror

In his discussion of terrorism in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* and *Voyous*, Derrida rejects Freud's argument for the intrinsic possibility of calculating levels of anxiety. Derrida equates the continuing effects of a traumatic experience not with the calculable intensity of a past experience (as in Freud's account) but with the incalculability of a future in which an event may happen which would be even more violent than one suffered in the past. In *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, this fundamental disagreement with Freud is evident in Derrida's rejection of the possibility of rigorously quantifying the traumatic effects of a terrorist attack. Against this view, Derrida draws attention to what is often excluded in media accounts of terrorist activities overseas: the affective or qualitative nature of terrorism, the extent to which terrorism by definition aims at inciting panic, fear, and terror in a given populace.

In response to a question from Borradori concerning the possibility of a thorough distinction between 'war' and 'terrorism', Derrida points out that contemporary notions of terrorism are caught up in the language of quantity and the quantifiable. Terrorists, for example, almost always justify the brutality of their attacks with reference to an economics of revenge and measurement, of violence and counter-violence. A terrorist act invariably presents itself as 'une réplique, dans une situation de surenchère' (*C*, 162). It is because of the

previously inflicted violence of an aggressor-state that the counter-violence of the terrorism must be even worse, or at the very least equal. This logic of calculability also lies behind the common accusation against states such as the US and Israel that they are 'plus terroriste' than the terrorists themselves (*C*, 162).[190] For Derrida, even a cursory consideration of the evidence would show that different quantities of violence do not always produce equal levels of anxiety. In Europe and the United States, for instance, 'des tueries quantitativement comparables ou même supérieures en nombre [...] ne produisent jamais de bouleversement aussi intense quand elles se produisent hors de l'espace européen ou américain (Cambodge, Rwanda, Palestine, Irak, etc.)'. We must therefore search for other types of explanations, 'des explications signifiantes et *qualitatives*' (*C*, 142).

There are two principal reasons why a fundamental inequality exists between qualitative responses to quantitatively equal events. First, if the events of September 11 are taken as exemplary, terrorist attacks aim at producing an affect (terror) that is as symbolically economical as possible, in the sense of producing a maximum of qualitative fear from a minimum of quantitative violence. This is why the symbolic heads of capitalism (the Twin Towers) and government (Washington) were set apart as privileged targets. Since 'l'action "terroriste" cherche à produire des effets psychiques (conscients et inconscients!) et des réactions symboliques ou symptomatiques' (*C*, 162), there can never be a calculable correspondence between the numbers of deaths (or the extent of damage inflicted) and the (conscious or unconscious) emotions provoked by the attacks. The second reason for a fundamental inequality concerns the role of technology and globalisation in the production and reproduction of images. Mass media technologies play a crucial role here in inciting these emotions. The role of the media is critical and explains why the putting to death of thousands of people in a short amount of time can provoke fewer and less intense psychical and political

[190] E.g. Chomsky 2000.

effects than the murder of a single individual in a single country that is 'suréquipé du point de vue médiatique' (*C*, 162). For Derrida, the notion of the quantity or intensity of a violent act is thus fundamentally misleading in attempting to understand the concept of terrorism.

Against the naivety of a positivist account of trauma such as Freud's, Derrida emphasises the qualitative or affective nature of terror. The feeling of terror, he argues, stems from a feeling of vulnerability, of being in a situation in which one is deprived of a sense of mastery. This sense of vulnerability was exploited by mass media tele-technologies —'qu'aurait été le "11 septembre" sans la télévision?'—and various political interests in the wake of the attacks (*C*, 163). More than the quantifiable destruction of the Twin Towers or the Pentagon, more than the murder of thousands of victims, 'la *vraie* "terreur" a consisté, et *elle a commencé là*, à en exposer, à en exploiter, à en faire exposer et exploiter l'image par la cible même' (*C*, 163). Derrida argues that this target (the US Administration and its allies) had a decided political interest in fostering its own vulnerability. Once exposed, this vulnerability faced with an even worse aggression-to-come 'suffit à effrayer, disons à terrifier' (*C*, 163), thus authorising a sequence of counter-terrorist *surenchères* aimed at repaying the violence inflicted and protecting against future threats. It is for this reason, Derrida concludes, that the quality of terror induced by the sense of vulnerability towards future aggressions must be seen as 'la racine indéracinable de la terreur et donc d'un terrorisme qui s'annonce avant même de s'organiser en terrorisme' (*C*, 164).

Echoing Freud's distinction between different categories of fear, Derrida questions whether it is possible to distinguish 'la terreur' from 'la peur', 'l'angoisse', and 'la panique' (*C*, 155). In attempting to understand the qualitative specificity of 'terreur', Derrida, like Freud, links the notion of terror to the traumatism inflicted on the collective unconscious of citizens of a nation state. Unlike Freud, however, Derrida argues that this traumatism is not only caused by 'ce qui c'était passé', as in the classical theory of trauma, but is in fact *futural*,

produced by 'la menace indéterminée d'un avenir plus dangereux' (*C*, 155). Every experience of terror, he points out, is not necessarily linked to an act of terrorism. This observation is important to Derrida's reading because it allows him to detach the affective dimension of terror from politically motivated notions of 'terrorism' and in doing so free himself from the abyssal logic of 'terrorist' and 'counter-terrorist' aggressions. All attempts at rigorously distinguishing between 'terrorists' on the one hand and 'non-terrorists' on the other, all 'définitions courantes' or 'légales', Derrida claims, can ultimately be shown to be aporetic. As evidence of this, he cites a lengthy definition of '*terrorist activity*' implemented by the US government, the conceptual framework of which, he argues, can easily be reduced to a point of unresolvable contradiction (*C*, 156, n.1). This confusion in our concept of terrorism is essential to the wider goal of Derrida's analysis because, as he remarks, 'plus un concept est confus, plus il est docile à son appropriation opportuniste' (*C*, 158). At the same time, he is careful to warn us not to mistake the semantic instability of the term 'terrorism' as a sign of the word's inherent meaninglessness. On the contrary, the meaning of the word is confused only in the sense that it is overburdened with competing meanings, a diffuseness which calls for a rigorous philosophical analysis of the relations of force ('rapports de force') in which these contradictory interpretations arise (*C*, 160).

Derrida develops his analysis of the role of terror (*terreur*) in terrorism by turning to an analysis of the relationship between terrorism and territory (*territoire*). In a similar vein to his rejection of any quantitative definition of 'terrorism', he rejects any definition of terrorism founded on territorial, or localisable, elements. He does this for two reasons. The notion of an intrinsic relationship between territory and terrorism was frequently exploited by the US authorities in the wake of 9/11, through a persistent exteriorisation of the 'threat' of attack onto specific geographical territories, first in Afghanistan (whose 'population civile et ses armées ne sont pas les ennemis des Américains') and then in Iraq. As Derrida points out, it

was obvious to all that Bin Laden was not Afghan and had been rejected not only by his own country but 'par tous les "pays" et par tous les Etats' (*C*, 153). This tendency to territorialise terrorism, that is, to spatialise it or localise it in one *topos*, is frequently an ideological gesture and thus highly strategic; Derrida will later account for this exteriorisation, as we shall see, by appealing to the Freudian concept of projection and to his own notion of autoimmunity. The second reason Derrida rejects an intrinsic link between terrorism and territory concerns the increasing obsolescence of physical locality in the planning and execution of terrorist attacks. Given advances in technological sophistication in recent decades, it is obvious that contemporary terrorism is not simply 'virtuel' in the sense of being a potential threat: it is also virtual in the technological sense.[191] Terrorist attacks, Derrida notes, no longer depend on 'crude' technologies such as planes and bombs but may now involve computer viruses capable of paralysing the economic, military, and political resources of a country or continent (*C*, 154). These attacks can be launched from almost anywhere on earth, at considerably reduced cost and means. Moreover, it is not only physical buildings and localities which are now open to attack, but 'les *networks* informatiques dont dépend toute la vie (sociale, économique, militaire, etc.) d'un "grand pays"' (*C*, 154). The advent of microbiological warfare may soon render the physical spectacle of terrorism obsolete, replacing it with the invisible, virtual threat of nanotechnologies which are increasingly 'invisibles' and 'imprenables' (*C*, 154).

These insufficiencies in our commonplace definition of terrorism lead Derrida to conclude that 'le rapport entre la terre, le territoire et la terreur a changé' (*C*, 154). Our contemporary usage of the word 'terrorism' has not kept pace with transformations in the phenomenon that the word designates. For Derrida, this means that a new thinking of terrorism, one which emphasises its affective dimensions and its (related) spectral character, is

[191] The French 'virtuel' signifies 'virtual' in a technological sense and in a sense of futural possibility or potentiality.

required. Derrida signals the importance of psychoanalysis as a reference point in this new thinking of terrorism by pointing out, with regard to these transformation in technologies of terrorism, that 'notre inconscient y est déjà sensible, il le sait déjà et c'est ce qui fait peur' (*C*, 154). This rethinking of terrorism, even if one persisted in naming it 'terrorism', would nevertheless cover a new concept and new distinctions (*C*, 155).

ii. From Trauma to Traumatism

In order to make palpable his theory of the traumatic character of our vulnerability with respect to unforeseeable future threats, Derrida proposes a thought experiment. He asks us to imagine, in the wake of September 11, that reassurance were possible that the violence of the attacks had come to an end and that there would never again be such an event on such a catastrophic scale (*C*, 149). If it were possible to repress entirely the structural vulnerability of the trace to the future in this way, he concludes, then the process of mourning could be concluded in a relatively short amount of time. Regardless of whether a brisk mourning period is considered to be a good or bad thing, life would soon return to 'le cours normal de l'histoire ordinaire'. Yet this in no way corresponds to what happened in the weeks and months following the attacks. One of the key reasons why the consequences of 9/11 were so enduring and wide-ranging was that vulnerability towards a future attack—in other words, the threat of a violence that would be even worse—was actively accentuated by various ideological interests. This traumatism was itself cultivated by interests stressing 'la menace du pire *à venir* plutôt que [...] une aggression passée et "finie"' (*C*, 149).[192]

[192] Martin McQuilan has argued that the United Kingdom's response to terror attacks on its soil has been different to that of the United States. Instead of emphasising the traumatic character of terrorism, British media and political interests stress the preparedness of the state and its emergency services: 'the United Kingdom has no wish to emphasise its own trauma; it is neither new to terror attacks on its own soil nor militarily powerful enough to attempt unilateral global retribution for them. [...] Instead, it is left with the much mythologised "spirit of the blitz" to demonstrate its ability to cope with assault' (2009: 12-3).

According to Derrida's argument, this potential threat has, at least since the 1990s, been increasingly conceived in terms of an aggression-to-come that would be worse than the kind of real and potential threats experienced at the height of the Cold War. The bilateral nuclear threats of the latter have been replaced by virtual and spectral threats (nuclear, bacteriological, technological) that can no longer be easily localised to an individual nation state (C, 149-50). Paradoxically, safeguards taken against these increasingly invisible threats evince a faith in the logic of an essentially spatialisable threat. This can be seen, for example, in the physical separation of symbolic sovereign heads of state, or in the installation of a system of anti-missile missile systems designed to protect the integrity of American soil by localising the threat in a precise point in time and space. All of these 'defence mechanisms' (amongst which George W. Bush's 'terror alert levels' provide a striking example) provide us with fitting instances of Freud's claim that quantitative (that is, calculable) states of preparedness protect against the threat of a future that can be domesticated and conditioned by the aforementioned technologies.

The association Derrida draws between contemporary terrorist threats and the Cold War may at first seem arbitrary. It is an important association to grasp, however, because it ties together the themes of technology and calculability that we will turn to later in this chapter. Derrida's general aim in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* and *Voyous* is to investigate the way in which notions of terror, terrorism, and warfare have been transformed following the supposed 'end' of the 'Cold War' (he is careful to place both terms in quotation marks). He argues that a fundamental shift in concepts of terrorism has been simultaneous with a rapid development in technologies of warfare. It is the duty of the philosopher not only to interrogate these transformations[193] but to call for new conceptual frameworks which take

[193] The English title of *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* gestures more directly towards such a duty: *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003).

account of the spacing separating the provenance of these concepts from a context in which they have now become outdated.

There are two reasons why the threat of a large-scale terrorist attack has worsened following the collapse of the USSR as a Superpower. First, both the anxiety and the threat of a terrorist attack have intensified following the arming of so-called 'rogue states' (*Etats voyous*) by leading Western powers. Such states have become uncontrollable in their pursuit of sophisticated (often nuclear) weapons of warfare. As Derrida points out, it is increasingly difficult to confine such 'rogue' threats to a single geographical location, in which 'des puissances organisées, stables, identifiables' are both 'localisables' and 'territorialisées' (*V*, 149). It is precisely this loss of sovereignty, and the anxiety and sense of vulnerability it engenders, that requires a concurrent increase in psychical and military (i.e., technoscientific) 'states of preparedness' in the US and in other so-called 'target' nations. For Derrida, the anxiety that tries to guard against these unseen threats stems from a wound lodged in the unconscious: the unforeseeability of a more violent attack in the future. It is because these threats cannot be calculated in their entirety (in their temporal occurrence, their intensity, their geographical 'taking place', etc.) that anxiety always fails to master the structural vulnerability that originarily produces it. As Derrida argues, since 'il est difficile de mesurer les degrés et les formes de cette force' (*C*, 15), a new thinking of spectrality and virtuality is required.

The second reason for the transformation in our conception of war and terrorism in the wake of the Cold War was the collapse, or rather the collapse of the illusion, of a global equilibrium of power that is or was centered on two equal forces. In the Cold War, the United States and the USSR were engaged in *la théorie des jeux* ('Game Theory'), a theory which gave at least a semblance of calculability to the sequence of *surenchères* that characterised the progress of the conflict. In this sense, the latter amounted to 'une évaluation réciproque et

organisée des risques respectifs' (*C*, 150). For Derrida, there is no means of counter-balancing and thus neutralising a terrorist threat that cannot be calculated, localised, or confined to a single nation state. Today 'la menace nucléaire, la menace "totale" ne vient plus d'un Etat mais de forces anonymes, absolument imprévisibles et incalculables' (*C*, 150-1). We can thus no longer ignore the ineradicable inequality that exists between various international interests: organisations, agencies, governments, institutions, etc. Since the end of the Cold War and the advent of so-called 'international terrorism', Derrida points out, the traditional 'balance of power' theory of international relations has less legitimacy than ever.

The internationalisation of terrorist networks is concurrent with their increased virtualisation. Since such virtualisation implies an ever more incalculable level of threat, then the threat of international terrorism 'paraît infiniment plus dangereuse, effrayante, terrifiante que la guerre froide' (*C*, 151). In order to understand the implications of this radical transformation, Derrida appeals to the theoretical resources of psychoanalysis. In situating the threat of a worse and incalculable attack *à venir*, one which gives rise to a 'terreur absolue' at the origin of all 'terrorismes', Derrida refers to the indelible traces that this terror has inscribed in 'l'inconscient géopolitique de tous les vivants' (*C*, 151). A psychoanalytic register is required to understand this intensifying virtualisation of terror because

> à cause de l'invisibilité anonyme de l'ennemi, à cause de l'origine indéterminée de la terreur, à cause de son absence de figure (individuelle ou étatique), à cause du fait qu'on ne sait pas ce qu'est un événement *de* l'inconscient et *pour* cet inconscient qu'il faut pourtant prendre ici en compte, [...] le pire peut paraître simultanément inconsistant, passager, léger, dénié, refoulé, voire oublié, relayé comme un événement parmi d'autres, un des 'événements majeurs', si vous préférez, dans une grande chaîne d'événements passés et à venir (*C*, 151-2).

In both *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, one psychoanalytic concept in particular plays a privileged role: projection. In taking key elements from Freud's theory of projection in order to understand these virtual 'terrorist' threats, Derrida interweaves this fundamental

defence mechanism of the psyche with his own insights into the all too real defence mechanisms of the body politic—what he calls, as we shall see, its 'auto-immunité'.

iii. *From Projection to Autoimmunity*

In a telling discussion towards the end of his essay 'La raison du plus fort (Y a-t-il des Etats voyous?)', the first and longest segment of *Voyous*, Derrida argues that the usage made of the term 'rogue state' by the US and other Western powers from the 1990s onwards can be explained with reference to the Freudian concept of projection:

> Tous ces efforts pour identifier des Etats 'terroristes' ou des Etats voyous sont des 'rationalisations' [in the psychoanalytic sense, he clarifies a little later] destinées à dénier plus que l'angoisse absolue, la panique ou la terreur devant le fait que la menace absolue ne peut plus procéder ou rester sous le contrôle de quelque Etat, de quelque forme étatique que ce soit. Il fallait dissimuler, par cette projection identificatoire, il fallait d'abord *se* dissimuler que des puissances nucléaires ou des armes de destruction massive sont virtuellement produites et accessibles en des lieux qui ne relèvent plus d'aucun Etat. Pas même d'un Etat voyou (*V*, 150).

Derrida's insistence here on a number of Freudian concepts and tropes (projection, rationalisation, self-dissimulation, and later 'dénégations') contrasts heavily with what he views as the outdated and indeed dangerous application of 'concepts [...] moribonds' in pre- and post-9/11 discussions of war and terrorism. This dangerous ambiguity is exemplified in the phrase 'war on terrorism', a key phrase in George W. Bush's post-9/11 political rhetoric and one which Derrida views as confused and contradictory to its core. In *Voyous*, however, Derrida's analysis of the rhetorical strategies of US political discourse focuses on 'l'expression diabolisante de *rogue State*', a term which, he notes, gained considerable currency under the Clinton Administration before being abandoned, after much domestic and international controversy, in June 2000 (*V*, 151). In his analysis of the provenance and decline of this term, Derrida describes a parallel transformation in our approach to warfare, one

which, we saw, has become increasingly virtual, non-localisable, and thus transnational. Both the notion of a 'war on terror' and the concept of a 'rogue state' are expressions, Derrida claims, of a 'projection identificatoire', a process which is fundamental, we shall see, to the process of 'auto-immunité'.

According to Freud, projective identification is one of the most basic psychical functions. The Latin root of the word projection implies the throwing of light onto an object. Just as light illuminates the object onto which it is projected, it can also deform our perception of the object itself. As early as 1894, Freud identified projection as fundamental to the operation of the psychical apparatus. In an early essay on anxiety neurosis, he claims that if the psyche is endangered by too much excitation coming from within, it '*behaves as though it were projecting that excitation outwards*' (*SE*, *III*, 112). In a later letter to Fliess, Freud links the concept of projection to that of paranoia since 'the purpose of paranoia is [...] to fend off an idea that is incompatible with the ego, by projecting its substance onto the external world' (*SE*, *I*, 209). Freud also underscores the role of fear in projection, arguing that 'hysterical phobia' must be seen as a species of projection in which 'the subject is able to protect himself by attempts at flight against an external danger which has taken the place of an internal claim of the drives' (*SE*, *XIV*, 224). At a basic level, then, projection refers to an external perception formed and deformed by an internal psychical tension. The object which appears as though it is perceptually objective is in reality perceived through the prism of the subject's own unacceptable drive impulses. The mechanism of projection is thus essential to the correct functioning of the psyche and is described by Freud as one of the 'means adopted for defence' (*SE*, *XIV*, 223).

In order to show how these features of projection are key to understanding Derrida's notion of autoimmunity, it is necessary to return to a period in Derrida's writings before the term 'auto-immunité' was in active use. The concept is already well established in 'Spéculer

—sur "Freud"', notably in a passage in which Derrida analyses Freud's fictional hypothesis of a unicellular organism in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud's description of this organism is particularly relevant here both because it sheds light on the concept of projection and because the analogy itself aims at clarifying the fundamental mechanics of trauma.

In the fourth chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud asks us to picture 'a living organism in its most simplified possible form', 'an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 26). By necessity, such a unicellular organism would possess a 'surface turned towards the external world': an organ designed to receive stimuli coming from the outside (the so-called 'protective shield'). In order to receive such stimuli, Freud concludes, this shield must be 'differentiated', a change which can itself only come about through the reception of stimuli that causes the receiving surface to become 'permanently modified' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 26). Without the existence of a protective shield, the organism would be killed by an overwhelming quantity of stimulus coming from the external world. Such a shield is acquired in a process that is akin to partial suicide, Freud claims, because the organism must surrender the outermost part of itself to an inorganic state designed to deaden external excitations, leaving the inner layers to filter quantities which now possess only a fraction of their original potency. In other words, the vesicle must sacrifice a part of itself in order to achieve greater security and protection against external threats. Later on, Freud associates this process of becoming-inorganic with an underlying death drive that compels the organism to return to an anterior, inorganic state: 'by its death,' he writes, 'the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate' (*SE*, *XVIII*, 27).

This is the case, of course, only in the normal course of events. If the external stimuli are of such intensity that they break through the protective shield, requiring the impoverishment of other systems in order to produce an 'anti-cathexis' capable of binding the inflowing stimuli, then trauma is the inevitable consequence (*SE*, *XVIII*, 29). In the case of a

traumatic breach, the organism sets in motion 'every possible defence measure' in order to contain the sudden increase in quantity invading the psychical systems. The problem is thus one of mastering or binding the excessive external excitation. In Freud's analogy, it is necessary for an 'anti-cathexis' to be deployed to the 'front' in order to bind the incoming excitation. But this anti-cathexis by definition involves an impoverishment of other cathected systems. As we saw earlier, what differentiated this theory of trauma from the mechanical theory is the importance Freud attaches to the element of fright (*Schreck*) and anxiety (*Angst*). Trauma, he claims, 'is caused by lack of any preparedness for anxiety, including lack of hypercathexis of the systems that would be the first to receive the stimulus'. In another military metaphor, Freud argues this preparedness (or 'hypercathexis') constitutes 'the last line of defence of the shield against stimuli' (SE, XVIII, 31).

In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida offers a detailed analysis of Freud's use of military tropes in his description of the conflict between psychical agencies. By focussing on figures such as these, Derrida aims at widening the implications of Freud's account of the organism's 'protective shield'. Derrida argues that Freud's description of the structure of the unicellular organism can be transposed onto every 'corpus' in general, whether political, institutional, textual, etc. In doing so, he lays the theoretical groundwork for his later account of autoimmunity in *Voyous* and in his interview with Borradori. In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', he writes:

> De cette topique de la 'bulle' (dont on peut transférer la métaphore sur tout corpus, tout organisme, toute organisation, par exemple) [...], Freud réaffirme encore qu'elle est toute entière aux ordres du PP [the pleasure principle]. Il y voit même l'explication des 'projections' pathologiques qui consisteraient, pour leur opposer une technique de protection plus efficace, à traiter des excitations d'origine interne comme des messages ou des émissaires venus du dehors. Cela aussi s'applique et se transfère à la 'bulle' de tout corpus et de toute organisation (*CP*, 369).

What interests Derrida in this 'metaphor' is the way in which the corpus protects the coherency of its own identity not only by exteriorising interior threats (the drives) but also by submitting itself to an economy of death (suicide) in order to immunise itself against annihilation. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is the same structure Derrida identified in the child's game of *fort-da*, in which, through a process of autoaffection, the child attempts to immunise himself against the unmasterable movement of spacing as temporisation. According to Derrida, Freud's fictional vesicle must undergo a similar economy of death by rendering a part of itself inorganic in order to deaden excitations coming from the external world. This analogy between the process of autoaffection and Freud's account of the vesicle suicidal behaviour explains why Derrida, towards the end of *Voyous*, refers to 'cette inflexible et cruelle auto-immunité qu'elle [psychoanalysis] appelle parfois "pulsion de mort"' (*V*, 215). He thus equates Freud's discussion of the corpus's drive towards death with the subject's 'autoimmune' inscription of its own trace.

In Derrida's work, the 'logique illogique' (*V*, 173) of autoimmunity conforms to the same underlying structure which his Derrida's discussion of the relationship between force and inscription, temporisation and spatialisation, autoaffection and heteroaffection.[194] Irrespective of the corpus in question, the underlying process of autoimmunity always remains the same: the subject (individual, institution, nation) undergoes its own death through spatialisation in order to immunise itself against its own vulnerability to spacing as temporisation, to the incalculability of the *à venir*. At the same time, while inscription allows the corpus to bind itself to itself, to achieve a measure of self-identity and thus self-mastery, the tracing of a finite mark also leaves it vulnerable to self-difference, division, and even

[194] For a more detailed account of the relationship autoimmunity and Derrida's political writings than I can offer here, see Naas 2008: 122-46.

destruction. In immunising itself against the deviating effects of spacing, the corpus must paradoxically attack the security of its own self-identity.[195]

According to the illogical logic of autoimmunity, then, in order for a political corpus to 'exist' as such, it must inscribe itself through the technics of the trace. The political institution must draw a spatialising limit (whether geographical, territorial, political, cultural, virtual, etc.) which protects and calculates against the unforeseeability of future threatens. In his later work, Derrida develops this understanding of autoimmunity in terms similar to his discussion of projection in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"'. In *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, for example, autoimmunity is described as the corpus's attempt at protecting itself against its own external threats. There is something irreducibly terrifying, Derrida argues, about the threat of an unknown future in which nothing can be taken for granted. When he invokes 'cette *terrifiante* et fatale logique de l'auto-immunité' (*C*, 144), he is suggesting an explicit link between autoimmunity and notions of fear, anxiety, and terror that we saw to be crucial to both Freud's and Derrida's thinking of trauma. Just as Freud insists that the threat from internal stimulus far outweighs that of excitation coming from the outside, terror is at its most terrifying and therefore its most dangerous, Derrida claims, when the threat is internal: 'la source la plus irréductible de la terreur absolue, celle qui, par définition, se trouve la plus démunie devant la pire menace, ce serait celle qui provient du "dedans", de cette zone où le pire "dehors" habite chez "moi"' (*C*, 145, n.1). Such vulnerability incites fear because it strikes at the heart of the supposed indemnity of the corpus against the threat of future destruction: 'ma vulnerabilité est alors, par définition et par structure, par situation, sans limites' (*C*, 145). This explains why there is always an element (whether paranoid or justifiable) of the *chez moi* when one speaks

[195] Michael Naas has also noted the parallels between autoimmunity and Freud's theory of the death drive (2008: 124). He is wrong, however, to emphasise the solely passive nature of the process, in contradistinction to autoaffection: 'while all the other *auto*-prefixed words, without exception, express the power, independence, and stability of an enduring self, *autoimmunity* evokes the powerlessness, vulnerability, dependence, and instabiity of every self or *autos*' (2008: 125). As I argued in the previous chapter, Derrida's non-synonymous substitutions (*différance*, *écriture*, the trace, autoimmunity) must all be read according to a paradoxical logic of activity-passivity, mastery-powerlessness, life-death. To emphasise only one side of the equation is to fall into the same binary logic that these concepts are designed to subvert.

of the terror of terrorism, since 'le terrorisme a toujours quelque chose de "domestique", sinon de national'. The worst and most efficient terrorism, he claims, is that which evokes an internal threat, striking at the heart of the '*at home*'. This is the fear that 'l'ennemi est *toujours aussi* logé à l'intérieur du système qu'il viole et terrorise' (*C*, 145, n.1).

In both of Derrida's texts on 9/11, references to autoimmunity can be grouped along one of two axes. The first relates to Derrida's discussion of the autoimmune structure of the *technē* and thus of technoscience more generally (I will return to this theme in the final section of this chapter). The second relates to his discussion of the development of political history since the end of the Second World War, in particular the supposed 'end' of the Cold War and the subsequent appearance of the 'War on Terror'. The parallels between the 'implacable loi' (*V*, 83) of autoimmunity, the psychoanalytic notion of projection, and certain politico-historical features of the last thirty years are particularly striking here.

In his dialogue with Borradori, Derrida develops these parallels in a discussion of a series of autoimmune moments (*temps*) in recent political history. The first example of autoimmunity relates to the 'effraction' of the events of September 11. Derrida points out that the events of 9/11 were followed by insistent claims that the attacks were unprecedented. The media, for example, promoted the erroneous view that 9/11 constituted 'la première violation du territoire national des Etats-Unis depuis près de deux siècles' (*C*, 145). In this sense, the intrusion of the terrorist attacks of September 11 was portrayed as 'une effraction d'un type nouveau' (*C*, 145). To a large degree, media coverage of the event reinforced this fantasy ('phantasme') of a superpower whose apparently unbreachable protective shield had been violated and whose terrifying vulnerability had now been exposed. This violation was both metaphorical (symbolic) and literal (topological) since the United States had seen its own soil violated, a soil which provided 'la figure littérale du fondement ou de la fondation de cette "force de loi"' (*C*, 146). For Derrida, the violation of this soil is traumatic because what is

also undermined in this violation is the heavily policed and protected frontier separating the domestic from the foreign, the interior from the exterior, the past from the future.

In spite of the persistence with which such a view was promoted by the American administration and various national and international media organs in the aftermath of the attacks, Derrida claims that any understanding of 9/11 as the unprecedented violation of a previously invulnerable national corpus is itself entirely superficial. The crudeness of such an interior/exterior opposition conceals an underlying complexity which Freud's notion of projection can help us to interrogate. The first 'symptôme d'auto-immunité suicidaire' of the United States, Derrida claims, concerns the porousness of this supposedly stable opposition between the domestic and the foreign. Even a cursory consideration of the facts reveals that it was not the case that American soil was exposed to a simple, one-sided aggression coming from the outside. Rather, Derrida argues, it is evident that the attack on American *territoire* came from an internal threat: from forces which, although they appear to be without strength or force in their own right, find the means, through 'le déploiement d'un savoir *high-tech*', to seize an American weapon, in an American city, in an American airport (*C*, 146-7). The safe opposition between domestic security and international danger is thus far more problematic than originally supposed. Moreover, Derrida points out that the hijackers who instigated and carried out the attacks on the Twin Towers were in fact immigrants who had been trained (*formés*) both *in* the US and *by* the US. Hence they incorporate ('incorpent') two suicides in one: their own literal suicide on the day of the attacks *and* that of the country in which they were welcomed, educated, and armed. For Derrida, this double suicide expresses the autoimmune structure of global (and globalised) politics. It was the United States who, at least since the Cold War and no doubt before, had prepared the conditions of possibility for the emergence not only of the hijackers themselves, but for a number of significant terrorist

figures, of whom a 'Bin Laden' or a 'Saddam Hussain' are only two of the most salient examples.

A second example of the autoimmune logic of global politics is found in what Derrida calls the '*cercle vicieux de la répression*' (*C*, 152). Whereas the previous example concerned the autoimmune structure of the terrorist attacks themselves, in this example Derrida considers the defence mechanisms deployed by the US in the wake of the attacks. Regarding the terrifying threat to come which Derrida locates at the 'origin' of the defensive panic in the days and weeks following the attacks, it is clear that the US and other global agencies were not entirely 'sans défense contre la menace de ce mal' (*C*, 152). For Derrida, however, these mechanisms of defence (increases in the terrorist 'threat' levels, the intensification of police presence, protracted military interventions abroad, etc.) in fact work to regenerate the causes of the aggressions to which they claim to put an end. This reflects the paradoxical logic of autoimmunity at its most basic level: the 'effect' (e.g. US intervention abroad) produces its own 'cause' (terrorist violation of the national territory), implying an abyssal logic which undermines the classical opposition between primary and secondary. This abyssal structure also characterises, we saw earlier, the endless sequence of attacks and counter-attacks involved in terrorist and state aggressions.

For Derrida, all of these defence mechanisms respond to the vulnerability of the US national corpus. What Derrida calls 'projection identificataire' (*V*, 150) provides a way of both externalising dangerous internal threats and conditioning what always remains unconditional: spacing as an incalculable opening towards the future. It is impossible to fully understand Derrida's treatment in *Voyous* of the US government's political rhetoric without some reference to this concept of projected threats. The notion of a 'rogue state' (*état voyou*) is a powerful example of this process of projective identity ('identificataire' because it both creates and deforms an external perception, while simultaneously reinforcing a sense of

domestic self-presence). The appearance of the term 'rogue state' provides Derrida with a key example of the role played by projection in international politics. For Derrida, the term is inextricably linked to the potential threat of a nuclear attack on US soil. In the wake of 9/11, for instance, the possibility of a worse (*pire*) nuclear threat terrifies precisely because it suggests a number of phantasmic threats and violent potentialities: 'cette virtuelle attaque nucléaire n'exclut pas les autres [...] chimiques, bactériologiques, informatiques' (*V*, 149). As a means of reinforcing the protective shield separating domestic security from foreign threat, the appearance of the term responds to the terrifying nature of the increased spectrality of enemies which were formerly localisable to discrete politico-geographical entities. The denunciation of 'rogue states' aims at identifying 'des Etats "terroristes"' (*V*, 150), with the goal of conditioning and controlling the virtuality of a potential nuclear threat by spatialising it within the determinable borders of a nation-state: '[ces aggressions] étaient identifiées, dans leur origine, à des Etats et donc à des puissances organisées, stables, identifiables, localisables, territorialisées' (*V*, 149).

Derrida argues that this concept of 'rogue state' has become incompatible with the increasingly virtual nature of international terrorism since the Cold War. Although the threat of attack had been 'contenue' with relative success during the Cold War by an apparently bilateral balance of power, today the threat is more spectral than ever before. Advances in the technoscience of warfare mean that it is increasingly difficult to contain such threats within a determined *topos*, 'là où la menace ne vient plus d'un Etat constitué ni meme potentiel qu'on pourrait traiter en Etat voyou' (*V*, 149).

As we have seen, it this increased virtualisation of warfare which necessitates Derrida's 'return' to psychoanalysis as a discourse singularly capable of thinking the relationship between projection, fear, and the virtuality of threat. Today these virtual-potential threats are no longer localisable to one state, as was the case during the 'surenchère

calculable' (*V*, 214) of the Cold War. Since 'tout cela est fini', at stake today is a new type of calculating rationalisation. Regarding the threatening 'vacarme de mobilisations guerrières' (*V*, 214), Derrida argues that they must be interpreted using the conceptual legacy of psychoanalysis. We must consider these terrifying mobilisations as 'projections utiles et d'ultime dénégations, [...] ce que la psychanalyse nomme "rationalisations", comme elle parle aussi de "théorie sexuelle". Une puissante "rationalisation" serait en cours, consciente ou inconsciente de son calcul' (*V*, 214).[196] This reactionary rationalisation consists in accusing and in campaigning against said 'rogue states', who themselves care little for international law (*V*, 214). This structure of externalisation, however, is by necessity autoimmune since sovereign states frequently abuse these same international laws and in the process both assert and undermine sovereignty. Such states often behave like the very 'rogue states' they denounce.

Derrida's account of autoimmunity aims at drawing attention to the aporetic nature of binary political logic, notably as employed by successive American administrations in opposing hostile 'rogue states' to allied defenders of freedom. He makes use of the figure of autoimmunity as a means of exploring the necessarily suicidal tendencies of every corpus, every subject which attempts to maintain its own protective shield and defend itself from dangers of the external world. In order to establish such a shield, the corpus must take the risk of attacking its own defences, deploying, for example, dangerous anti-missile missile defence systems, or arming terrorists who may eventually seize power and one day turn against those who armed them. Yet these self-destructive tendencies are effected with the paradoxical aim of reinforcing the protective shield which gives a sense of coherence to the corpus in question. For Derrida, autoimmunity is the risk taken by the corpus in gambling on an unpredictable

[196] The French 'calcul' is far richer than the English 'calculation' in expressing what is at stake in Derrida's analysis because it describes both a kind of self-interest (*agir par calcul*) while also referring to calculus, the 'science of change', crucial to the Newtonian establishment of unconditional and thus 'necessary' scientific laws.

future (*à venir*): although it may increase its protective shield today, it may have sown the seeds of its own destruction tomorrow. In the final part of this chapter, I will show why for Derrida there can be no autoimmunity without the *technē*; just as there can be no Enlightenment, no globalisation, or progress that is free of the ambivalences and contradictory risks of every corpus's autoimmunisation.

iv. From Compulsion to Repeat to Technoscience

In the previous chapter, we saw how Derrida reinterprets the *fort-da* game as a scene of autoaffection. The game provides Derrida with a succinct analogy for the simultaneous (and we can now see, autoimmune) construction and deconstruction of subjectivity in *différance*. Highlighting the numerous technical objects described in Freud's analysis, Derrida associates the child's repetition of the game with the irreducible technical detour at stake in the subject's relationship to its 'natural' and 'pre-existing' self. In what follows, I will develop Derrida's treatment of technics in his account of the *fort-da* game through a reading of *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*. Both texts, I argue, throw fresh light on Derrida's theory of technics in their concern for the relationship between technoscience and ideals of Enlightenment, rationalism, and progress.

In *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, Derrida argues that the *technē* plays a key role in the autoimmune structure of globalised politics. Although technology makes possible the inscription of identity in the external world, thereby reinforcing the borders separating the corpus from dangerous external threats, it also entails a suicidal element at the heart of every process of subjectivation. This ambivalence is also a structural feature of globalisation, a phenomenon which Derrida argues is becoming increasingly synonymous with the virtualisation of modern life: 'aucune géographie, aucune assignation "territoriale" n'est donc

plus pertinente, depuis longtemps, pour localiser l'assise de ces nouvelles technologies de transmission ou d'agression' (*C*, 154). Derrida's reference to these technologies of 'transmission' and 'aggression' captures the symbiotic paradox he sees at the heart of the relationship between the 'self' and its prosthetic 'representation'. The threat of terrorist aggressions has and continues to be transformed by developments in information technology. In the age of computer viruses and nanotechnology, 'crude' weapons such as bombs and kamikaze planes are no longer required to bring a sovereign state to its knees (*C*, 154). On the other hand, technology has improved the efficiency of communication at an exponential rate, increasingly broaching the gap separating the 'event' itself from its delayed and mediated representation.[197] For this reason, if we are to understand the wider implications of 9/11 in Derrida's work, we must first examine the *diachronic* structure of the *technē*; this structure complements the strictly synchronic account given in his reading of the *fort-da* game.

1. The Theatre of War

For Derrida, as we have seen, rapid transformations in technologies of attack and defence require an urgent transformation in our conception of terrorism and warfare. This is why, in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, Derrida suggests that 9/11 might one day be seen as the twilight between two technological ages of terrorism. These attacks, he claims, may one day be viewed as a single scene in a 'théâtre archaïque de la violence', one that still evinced a comfortably localised and localisable character: 'un jour on dira: le "11 septembre" [...]. C'était encore de l'ordre du gigantesque: visible et énorme!' (*C*, 154). In the future, he speculates, non-visible and silent threats (such as fatal microbacteria and viral

197 As Derrida points out in his important dialogue on technology with Bernard Stiegler: 'ce qu'on appelle temps réel, c'est simplement une "différance" extrêmement réduite, mais il n'y a pas de temps purement réel puisque la temporalisation elle-même se structure à partir d'un jeu de rétention ou de protention, et par conséquent de traces' (*E*, 145).

nanotechnologies) will pose the greater danger. These coming threats already cast a long shadow over the present and 'notre inconscient y est déjà sensible, il le sait déjà et c'est ce qui fait peur' (*C*, 154).

With regard to the events of September 11, visibility remains a crucial element in the affect of terror engendered by our contemplation of the attacks. It is not surprising, then, that Derrida is interested in the *spectacularity* and the *specularity* of the attacks themselves. It is difficult to separate these two concepts in Derrida's work; they both describe essential characteristics of what he calls, from his earliest writings, the 'scène de l'écriture'. As we saw in Chapter 1, this 'scène' refers both to the technical scene of inscription (the *topos*, position, or substrate) *and* to the theatrical stage of writing, in which a symbolising dimension is seen to be intrinsic to every process of self-representation. In Chapter 4, specularity and spectacularity were seen to characterise the child's compulsive repetition of its own self-presence in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. For Derrida, the autoimmunity of technics, in its specular and spectacular dimensions, lies in its capacity to bring us closer to this moment of punctual self-presence while simultaneously alienating the self by forcing it to undergo its own death in writing.

In this sense, September 11 was no less a scene of writing than the child's game of *fort-da*. Both 'events' are subject to the same uncontrollable spacing of *différance* and therefore involves the logocentric repetition of 'presence' in the face of the structural vulnerability of the trace. If traumatism is brought about by the 'cicatrice inconsciente' of an incalculable *à venir*, rather than a straightforward, calculable, and atemporal memory-trace (as in Freud's formulation), then any means attenuating or neutralising the traumatism will focus on dissimulating the fright (*Schreck*) of a terrorist attack. For Derrida, all such attempts at 'working-through' the traumatism are structurally doomed to failure and remain 'des tentatives désespérées' (*C*, 152). The always already punctured structure of the trace ensures

that our attempts to repress ('dénier, refouler, oublier') the traumatism of the future will always end in failure. At the same time, however, the autoimmune structure of technoscience means that what terrifies (in this case, technologies of warfare) will also constitute the source of our affective appeasement, allowing us to neutralise and appear to 'work-through' this very traumatism.

Given the autoimmunity of technology, a large part of *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* is taken up with exploring the association between technology, the compulsion to repeat, and the traumatic experience of 9/11. The compulsive media repetition of footage of the attacks is examined during a long footnote in which Derrida interprets three distinct 'loops' (*boucles*) at work in media coverage of the events. The first loop relates to technology and the compulsion to repeat. Derrida notes that televisual images of the 'l'éventrement' and 'l'effondrement' of the Twin Towers were reproduced with a feeling of immediacy (as though 'd'un "direct"') (*C*, 146, n.1). These images, almost simultaneous re-presentations of the events themselves, were then circulated on loop ('*en boucle*') by various national and international media organs. 'Le film ne cesse de passer et de repasser sur les écrans à travers le monde entier' (*C*, 146, n.1), Derrida notes, drawing attention to the spectacular, theatrical qualities emphasised by large-scale media coverage. This looped reproduction is explicitly referred to here as a 'compulsion de répétition'. Unlike the Freudian theory of trauma, however, in which a past event is successively repeated until the patient finds a means of working-through its traumatic character, in Derrida's analysis of 9/11 the repetition aims at heightening levels of anxiety in the face of an unknown future. Hence the images produce a reassuring semblance of reality (specularity), while also distancing the viewers through the *écart* of the cinematic. That the technical reproduction of these images 'confirme et neutralise à la fois l'effet d'une réalité' (*C*, 146, n.1) attests forcefully to the autoimmunity of technology. This ambivalence is

expressed in Derrida's description of the looped images as 'un mélange indissociable de douleur effroyable, effrayée, terrifiée et de jouissance inavouable' (*C*, 148, n.1).

While the first loop concerns the cinematic dimension of the attacks, the second loop describes the 'spécularité circulaire et narcissique de cette douleureuse jouissance'(*C*, 146, n. 1). Although watching the events repeatedly unfold is clearly a painful and terrifying process, for Derrida there is an irreducible yield of pleasure involved in our spectatorship of the attacks. As witnesses, we are terrified by the violence inflicted by and against the other, but we also terrified by the *jouissance* we experience when watching the looped video footage ('terrifiée d'y trouver de quoi jouir à voir'). This mingling of pleasure and pain in trauma, analysed by Freud in his description of the child's delicate balancing of pleasure and pain in his game of *fort-da*, is also evident in Derrida's description. Here the *jouissance* we derive from the specular and spectacular nature of the events relates in an essential way to the pleasure we take in reinforcing the frontier between self and other (American/Arab, domestic/ alien, liberty/enslavement), paradoxically experienced at the precise moment when the protective shield seems most violated and most vulnerable. For Derrida, this experience of the intrusion of a violent other is also an *inoculation* against the other, and therefore also an experience of the autoimmune structure of the ego, one which is '[terrifié] d'apaiser sa propre terreur par son propre voyeurisme' (*C*, 146, n.1).

The third and final loop, which Derrida calls a 'cercle vicieux', concerns the suicide of the attackers themselves. Derrida points out that the moment of sacrifice is a strange kind of suicide. This suicide destroys the ego, but only in order to leave a trace. This reflects the paradoxical structure of desire underpinning suicide in general: those who die wish to destroy themselves but also desire to bequeath a trace in their wake.[198] The autoimmunity of this suicide thereby 'témoigne de ce qui restera, du côté des "suicidés" (les *hijackers* et les

[198] On the aporetic logic of suicide, see Hägglund 2008: 163.

cadavres "disparus") *sans témoin*' (*C*, 146, n.1). It is in this ambivalent, divided, and aporetic character of autoimmunity that the parallels with Freud's thesis on the duality of life and death drives becomes clear. The death drive strives to return the organism to an inorganic state, while the libido endeavours as best it can to leave a trace, to procreate, and therefore to impart an inheritance. This is why Derrida argues in *Voyous* that the concept of autoimmunity is another means '[de] retourner ainsi quelque pulsion de mort contre l'autos' (*V*, 173) and later suggests that psychoanalysis had already begun to understand the unconditional law of a 'cruelle auto-immunité qu'elle appelle parfois "pulsion de mort"' (*V*, 215).

The figure of the closed circle or loop is investigated through an analysis of the sovereignty of the 'I'. A fully sovereign self, Derrida points out, would have mastery over the temporisation of spacing and would thus be capable of returning to itself at the precise temporal-spatial point at which it became separated from itself in the process of spatialisation. This impossible movement, Derrida argues, would involve the closing of the loop, 'la rotondité giratoire du retour à soi contre soi, à la rencontre de soi et à l'encontre du soi-meme' (*V*, 154). At stake in this notion of the closed circle of self-presence is the foundational opposition between the *physis*—what is natural, given, or presented from the beginning—and its various 'others': *technē*, *nomos*, *thésis*. Just as *physis* is intrinsically linked to life and to our thinking of the living being, its supposed contrary, the *technē*, is always already at work in our thinking of 'l'esprit, la culture, le symbolique, le spectre ou la mort' (*V*, 155). The notion of autoimmunity is intended to interrogate the process of perversion by which these 'normale et normative' oppositions become reinforced, and ultimately aims at demonstrating the fragility of this same oppositional logic. With respect to the biological and political implications of autoimmunity, Derrida notes that accounting for the latter is the only way of not falling victim to 'l'autorité de la conscience représentative, du moi, du soi et de l'ipséité' (*V*, 155); indeed, autoimmunity as a drive towards death inherent in every living

corpus (biological, political, institutional, etc.) is the only way 'de prendre en compte, en politique, ce que la psychanalyse appela un jour, jadis, l'inconscient' (*V*, 155).

Derrida explicitly equates the death which threatens the interior of every living corpus with the necessary supplementation of the living by technics. What is most characteristic of technics, Derrida claims, is that it *supplements* (as surplus but also as essential element, reflecting the ambiguity of the French *supplément*) the integrity of the corpus which supposedly precedes it. In 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', we saw, the child requires the supplementary technics of a spool or mirror in order to close the loop of his own self-presence. At the beginning of Derrida's interview with Borradori, the same process of technical supplementation is at stake in Derrida's description of our incantatory attachment to the term '9/11' and its various permutations: '"11 septembre, 11-Septembre, september eleventh, 9.11"' (*C*, 136). For Derrida, we must be attentive to this 'phénomène de langage, de nomination, de datation, cette compulsion de répétition (à la fois rhétorique, magique, poétique)' (*C*, 136) which consists in repeating a word both in spite and because of our inability to get a firm grasp on its precise meaning. As I have argued, this incantatory repetition occurs because the signifier ('9/11') remains vulnerable to reinterpretation in different contexts, to the irreducible possibility of the insertion of this phrase ('9/11') into a context in which it did not originally arise. Derrida provides an example of such a context in his description of the Chinese government's attempt at circumscribing, in the days and weeks following the attacks, domestic media coverage of the events (*C*, 165), something which implies the radically different 'meaning' of 9/11 for the United States and for China. For this reason, Derrida argues, it is crucial that we are attentive to what the date 9/11 'signifie, traduit ou trahit' in every contextual situation in which it occurs; if there is no unified 'concept' of 9/11, it is because such a concept is always divided by different ideological interests and different spatial and temporal contexts. This linguistic focus may seem pedantic, even

betraying a certain irresponsibility faced with the gravity of the events themselves, but for Derrida it is absolutely necessary to interrogate such repetition compulsions if we are to understand what is at stake 'au-delà du langage'—in other words, in the political domain (*C*, 136).

Philosophical reflection on the significance of 9/11 will thus involve asking *from what* and *from whom* this repetition compulsion arises, '[ce] qui pousse [the verbal form of the noun *pulsion*: drive] à répéter sans fin et sans savoir de quoi on parle' (*C*, 136). Politically, the compulsion arises as a kind of threatening injunction of the dominant ideological apparatus, what Derrida characterises as 'une formidable machine techno-socio-politique' (*C*, 134). Such a techno-socio-political machine has to a large degree conditioned and even constructed our response to the events of 9/11 (*C*, 134). According to this ideological compulsion, if the collapse of the towers marks a historical watershed (an event which 'fait date' in French), then it must be something definite and knowable in the present moment; it must be something that can be apprehended by laws and conditions (and therefore calculable and controllable). In this way, September 11 is presented by the dominant political hegemony as '"quelque chose" [qui] arrive pour la première et la dernière fois' (*C*, 134). In Derrida's view, as we have seen, it is far from certain that it is either.

Like the child's painful 'fort!' and joyous 'da!', our compulsive repetition of the date also arises from a much deeper compulsion. This repetition is an expression of the same drive towards the mastery of *différance* we examined in the previous chapter, in relation to Freud's concept of a primordial drive for mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*). For Derrida, our desire to inscribe ourselves, to bequeath exteriorised traces is a direct result of a drive towards sovereignty over the spacing of *différance*. As we saw, however, such traces both respond to and remain threatened by *différance* as temporisation. In spite of our incantatory repetition of

the technical re-presentation of the events ('9/11', 'September 11', etc.), 'vous ne savez pas encore ce que vous dites et ne pensez pas encore ce que vous appelez ainsi' (*C*, 136).

Although the meaning of the event remains 'ineffable', 'comme une intuition sans concept' (*C*, 134), we persist in holding to a conception of 9/11 as a singular event, one whose meaning was and is 'present' and is readily repeatable in the wake of the event itself. This apparent coherence is reinforced by our repetition of the word or phrase; our compulsive repetition protects us from the deeper trauma of the possibility of a worse attack. Paradoxically, however, the autoimmunity of the *technē* also heightens our terror and anxiety in the face of this possibility. The phrase is thus repeated, on the one hand, 'pour conjurer magiquement la "chose" même, la peur ou la terreur qu'elle inspire'. On the other hand, however, as Derrida notes, the repetition of the phrase also constitutes a way of denying ('dénier') our inability to name or think the event in question. In this way, 'la répétition a toujours pour effet protecteur de neutraliser, d'amortir, d'éloigner un traumatisme' (*C*, 135).

Developing the analysis of technology and repetition he outlines in his reading of the *fort-da* game in 'Spéculer—sur "Freud"', Derrida argues in *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre* that *all* technical supplementation implies a structural protection against the *à venir*, whether the technics in question is a particular phrase ('9/11'), a child's toy, or an amateur video recording. This relationship is evident in Derrida's extensive treatment of media coverage of the attacks, which he analyses through the prism of his theory of the archive. For Derrida, the looped video recordings, images, and radio broadcasts that followed in the wake of the attacks are exemplary of our *mal d'archive*: our feverish desire to return to an authentic and repeatable past origin (*archē*) that can endure the incalculable vicissitudes of spacing. This is why, in *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, Derrida argues that any reflection on 'la médiatisation télévisuelle de l'événement' must give rise to a concurrent reflection on the notion of the archive (*C*, 149, n.1).

The reassurance of what Derrida calls 'l'effet d'archive' involves a belief in the completion or closure of the traces of the past, that the event itself is 'classé' and 'enregistré' (C, 149, n.1). In *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, Derrida relates this *mal d'archive* to the desire to have done with the process of mourning the dead: 'on fait tout pour compléter en monumentalisant les enregistrements, s'assurant ainsi que les morts sont morts' (*C*, 149, n. 1). Such reassurance is tantamount to a belief that what has happened will not happen again, since it has already taken place (*avoir lieu*) and its meaning deposited in a physical *topos* (or substrate, in this case, the September 11 National Museum and Memorial). As evidence of this desire, Derrida refers to the examples of the televised images of the collapsing towers that were compulsively repeated on loop following the attacks and the audio recordings between police and firefighters during the collapse of the towers that were apprehended by a San Francisco radio station. Both of these sets of documents allow us to return to the (temporal, spatial) present of the event itself, to the moment, as he phrased it in *Mal d'archive*, when 'l'archive imprimée ne s'est pas encore détachée de l'impression première dans son origine singulière, irreproductible et archaïque' (*MA*, 150).

In spite of our structural inability to grasp such a moment, the increasing sophistication of technology aims at bringing us ever closer to this punctual moment of present experience, an experience in which univocal meaning is immediately presented to consciousness in a unified articulation of temporal and spatial presence. In *Voyous*, Derrida shows how the desire for an increasingly sophisticated technical mastery of *différance* goes hand in hand with techniques of sovereign political power. Here the same process of externalisation that bolsters the defence mechanisms of the vesicle is seen to be at work in technologies of defence and attack protecting the domestic interior of the United States from unknown threats coming from the 'outside' and thus from unforeseeable future threats. With respect to the post-9/11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, sovereign power is intimately

related to technical *savoir*. When discussing the archival power embodied by the written Constitution, for example, Derrida describes the latter as 'absolue' and 'souveraine', 'dont l'*arkhè* (le commandement principiel ou princier) dispose de la *tekhnè* (de la compétence techno-scientifique, du savoir)' (*V*, 111).

In the preceding analysis, I have argued that for Derrida technology is irreducibly marked by the autoimmune structure of its effects. This autoimmune ambivalence of technics is what gives rise to the apparently ineradicable paradoxes of globalisation. Globalisation both enables more efficient communication while simultaneously increasing the potential intensities of violent aggression. Derrida provides an excellent example of the autoimmunity of the *technē* during his discussion of the discrepancy between the impossibility of defining a 'rogue state' and the $60 billion spent by the US government on installing an anti-missile defence system against it (*V*, 139). The very notion of an anti-missile missile defence system exemplifies the paradoxical structure of the supposed protection afforded by *technē* against the coming of an unknown (and therefore terrifying and traumatising) future. In order to immunise the corpus against unknown 'external' threats, the body politic employs a highly sophisticated means of forestalling a missile attack by establishing, from within the domestic interior, its own system of preventative nuclear force, thus attacking itself (or leaving itself vulnerable to such an attack) at the very moment when it appears to reinforce its own protective shield. Nuclear power constitutes another example of a *technē* which, once 'stolen', like the originary Promethean *savoir* of fire, produces effects which are both potentially beneficial (nuclear power is an efficient source of energy) and potentially harmful (it itself remains volatile).[199] In this sense, the emphasis of calculability inherent in these defence mechanisms, which attempts to foresee and forestall a variety of potential threats coming from the outside, is always haunted by an irreducible incalculability.

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[199] Bernard Stiegler's work has developed and transformed Derrida's thinking of technology, taking as its point of departure the myth of Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus (1994).

2. Ratio

In the second essay of *Voyous* ('Le "Monde" des Lumières à venir. Exception, calcul et souveraineté'), Derrida locates the autoimmunity of the *technē* at the heart of the Enlightenment project of rationality. Through a reading of Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* Derrida argues that the structure of scientific progress is itself autoimmune. This is because the *telos* of European science as an 'infinite task' (in Husserl's definition) of rationality—'le téléologisme qui commande si puissamment les idéalismes et les rationalismes transcendantaux de Kant et de Husserl' (*V*, 179-80)—always operates by neutralising the incalculability of the event-to-come. As in his early 'Introduction' to Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, in which writing plays an essential role in constituting teleological idealities, Derrida here views the *technē* as intrinsically bound up with teleologism and the pursuit of knowledge: 'le téléologisme semble toujours inhiber ou suspendre, contredire même l'événementialité de ce qui vient, à commencer par l'événement scientifique, l'invention techno-scientifique' (*V*, 180). Technoscientific enquiry operates within a logic of the *retention* and *protention* of the trace, archiving past observations while establishing hypotheses which strip the future of its uncertain and undecidable character—a structure analysed in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Scientific discourse, for Derrida, is subject to the same autoimmune paradoxes as technology since both are 'programmée par une structure d'attente' (*V*, 180). Technoscientific enquiry is intimately linked not only with the foreseeability of the future but also with *protection* against the possible reversals and unforeseen consequences which threaten the coherence of the present and the past. Scientific knowledge lays down conditions, principles, and laws according to a 'dessin architectonique' (*V*, 179). Moving back and forth between the archiving of past events

(retention) and the prediction of future horizons of possibility (protention), technoscience allows us to gain mastery over the natural world, subjecting it to a number of laws (established or otherwise) which facilitate the progress of human knowledge. But in doing so it must circumscribe the role played by the future and can only understand the 'event' in relation to the horizon of the present, thereby domesticating the 'monstrosity' of the event before it comes to pass.

There is in this sense an intimate link between Enlightenment ideals of progress and rationalism and the autoimmune structure of technology. At the same time that technological sophistication appears to help us foresee and forestall future threats, thus limiting our levels of anxiety in reinforcing a sense of security, it also produces these anxieties through the uncontrollable transmission of technological power to so-called phantasmic 'rogue states' and virtual terrorist networks. In *Voyous*, Derrida argues that an intensification of the affect of terror in recent years has been the result of the fundamental shift following the Cold War. Technological might is no longer

> à la seule disposition d'un Etat ou d'une coalition d'Etats souverains qui se protègent et équilibrent la terreur, comme ils le firent durant la guerre froide dans une surenchère calculable, selon la donne d'une théorie des jeux raisonnée qui excluait, selon la plus haute probabilité, et en principe, l'opération suicide (*V*, 214).

The threat of violence we are experiencing today is thus 'plus visiblement suicidaire ou auto-immunitaire que jamais' (*V*, 214). This quasi-suicidal, autoimmune structure underlies the ambivalence of globalisation. Under the technological transformations of the post-Cold War period, a new terror has resulted from a greater powerlessness before the futural structure of *différance* as temporisation. The US and its allies 'ne font plus face à un ennemi identifiable dans la figure d'un territoire "étatique" au cours de ce qui serait encore une "guerre", voire une guerre contre le terrorisme international' (*C*, 213). Technology has brought about the threat of air- or terrestrial missile attacks, chemical or bacteriological attacks, nuclear attacks,

'cyber-attacks', etc.—all capable of destabilising and destroying the most powerful defence mechanisms ('appareils') of the State (*V*, 213), even one whose protective shield was reinforced by precisely these same processes.

What is critical to point out here is that Derrida not only describes this impulse for self-protection in terms of calculation and calculability but that he explicitly links this emphasis on reasonable prediction to the Enlightenment (*les Lumières*) and its inheritors. Rationality, he argues, has as its greatest weapon the concept of calculability (*ratio*, the linguistic and, for Derrida, metaphysical root of rationality, refers in its Latinate origins to both *reason* and *calculation*). When something is 'calculated', it is always calculated in terms of rational and necessary rules, exemplified by the Kantian 'architectonique' of unconditional transcendental laws towards which every critical philosophy aspires. Natural, political, economical, and psychological laws are all deployed with the aim of protecting against the unforeseeability of the future.

In his analysis of the autoimmune paradoxes of Enlightenment rationalism—encapsulated in the ambivalent relationship between globalisation, technology, and 9/11—Derrida accords a privileged position to the psychoanalytic notion of 'rationalisation'. We saw earlier how rationalisation is key to Derrida's reading of the US administration's 'projection identificataire', in which

> tous ces efforts pour identifier des Etats 'terroristes' ou des Etats voyous sont des 'rationalisations' destinées à dénier plus que l'angoisse absolue, la panique ou la terreur devant le fait que la menace absolue ne peut plus procéder ou rester sous le contrôle de quelque Etat [...]. Il fallait dissimuler, par cette projection identificatoire, il fallait d'abord *se* dissimuler que des puissances nucléaires ou des armes de destruction massive sont virtuellement produites et accessibles en des lieux qui ne relèvent plus d'aucun Etat (*V*, 150).

It is only later in the text of *Voyous* (subtitled 'Deux essais sur la raison'), during a discussion of the relationship between politics and the Enlightenment promotion of calculating *ratio*, that

Derrida returns to and expands on his earlier reference to rationalisation. He argues that we must view all of the 'defence mechanisms' (projection, phantasm, archival repetition, etc.) employed by the power-brokers of global politics through the prism of the psychoanalytic notion of rationalisation: '[le vacarme de ces mobilisations guerrières] ne peut faire oublier qu'il s'agit là de projections utiles et d'ultimes dénégations, de ce que la psychanalyse nomme "rationalisations"' (*V*, 214). Freud defined rationalisation as the patient's attempt at dissimulating the true unconscious motivation behind his or her actions. Specifically, the concept refers to 'compulsive acts' which are repeated by a patient suffering from an obsessional neurosis. For Freud, 'the patient's consciousness naturally misunderstands them and puts forward a set of secondary motives to account for them, rationalizes them, in short' (*SE*, *X*, 192). In Derrida's view, this concept can help us think through a similar rationalisation ('conscient ou inconsciente de son calcul') at work on the post-9/11 international political stage. This phantasmic rationale of 'rogue states' employed by the US and its allies in particular is used to authorise a sequence of legal and illegal military interventions, denying the underlying motivations (economic stability, the 'droit de passage d'un *pipe-line*', *C*, 160, etc), whether conscious or unconscious, by insisting in a compulsive way on the threat that rogue states represent, in real or phantasmic terms, to global security.

What psychoanalysis has taught us, Derrida here suggests, is that we must learn to mistrust rationalisations such as these (*V*, 215). As a *maître du soupçon*, Freud's thinking of unconscious motivation can help us to think through something like a 'political unconscious', one which both reflects and transforms the conceptual legacy bequeathed to us by psychoanalysis. For Derrida, Freud's notion of the unconscious represents a powerful theoretical resource for thinking the co-implication of processes such as anxiety and terror, trauma, projection, and rationalisation and their relationship to the contemporary political sphere. Hence, when speaking of the future of the *ratio*, of the rational and calculating

character of what he calls the Enlightenment-to-come, Derrida invokes in the same stroke Freud's psychoanalytic revolution: 'les Lumières à venir devraient donc nous enjoindre de *compter* aussi avec la logique de l'inconscient, et donc avec l'idée au moins, je ne dis pas avec la doctrine, engagé par une révolution psychanalytique' (*V*, 215, my emphasis). Both *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*, we have seen, attempt to come to terms with the autoimmune inheritance of rationality and in doing so fuse this inheritance with elements of the legacy of psychoanalysis.

Concluding Remarks

Although the reading of Derrida's work I have proposed in this thesis is based on a selective choice of texts, it would not be difficult to show that all Derrida's reflections on psychoanalysis—in spite of their formal and thematic diversity—are motivated by a common theoretical framework. This framework can be seen to actuate not only Derrida's inheritance of Freud but also all of the major intellectual discourses to which he is an heir, such as phenomenology, structuralism, and Marxism. As we have seen, this framework is composed of three distinct but interdependent elements. The first is Derrida's conception of inheritance (*l'héritage*) according to the logic of the trace. Derrida conceives the trace as traversed by a dual movement: the trace retains a mark of the past but can do so only faced with an incalculable future that threatens this retention in advance (1.i.1; 4.i.2). In the same way, the process of inheritance entails both a reaffirmation of the past as legacy and a transformation of this legacy in new and structurally unforeseeable contexts. The second element in Derrida's account of legacy is the process of spacing, which I have tried to show is pivotal to understanding his thinking of inheritance (3.ii.2). Spacing as spatialisation (exteriorisation, inscription) allows the endurance of a mark through time while also troubling the interpretation of this mark through the accumulation of different and differential contexts (temporisation). The process of spacing ensures that every legacy is unconditionally plural, a fact which both threatens and makes possible the survival of every inheritance. The third and final element of Derrida's theoretical framework is his discussion of responsibility, specifically our responsibility faced with this process of spacing. Spacing calls us to a responsibility that is irreducibly aporetic because it involves a responsibility towards a past that 'is' no longer (but whose traces have nonetheless been bequeathed to us) (Introduction, ii) *and* a responsibility towards a future in which this past legacy will require transformation

(3.ii). In these concluding remarks, I would like to recapitulate Derrida's theory of inheritance, to investigate whether psychoanalysis plays a privileged role in this theoretical account, and finally to pose the question of whether Derrida's own legacy has been inherited in a way that is consonant with his thinking of inheritance.

Derrida's most detailed treatment of the problem of inheritance is given during his late dialogues with Elisabeth Roudinesco. In a discussion entitled 'Choisir son héritage' (*DQD*, 11-40), following a question concerning his position within the wider context of postwar French cultural life, Derrida is led to hazard 'quelques généralités sur la notion d'héritage' (*DQD*, 15). He characterises inheritance here as a process that is subject to the same aporetic double bind at the core of his concept of the trace. Noting that the term 'légataire' is frequently associated with ideas of comfort and security, Derrida argues, on the contrary, that the inheritor is always in possession of an anxious conscience because he or she must always 'répondre à une sorte de double injonction, à une assignation contradictoire' . On the one hand, it is the duty of the legatee to reaffirm what he or she has inherited; inheritance involves knowing how to inherit 'ce qui vient "avant nous", et que donc nous recevons avant même de choisir' (*DQD*, 15). On the other hand, inheritance always involves an injunction to transform a legacy, 'le relancer autrement et le maintenir en vie' (*DQD*, 15). Paradoxically, for Derrida, the survival and vitality of a legacy is dependent on its continual interrogation and transformation. The act of inheriting is so problematic precisely because of 'cette contradiction formelle et apparente entre la passivité de la réception et la décision de dire "oui", puis sélectionner, filtrer, interpréter, donc transformer, ne pas laisser *sauf* cela même qu'on dit respecter avant tout' (*DQD*, 16). This double injunction explains why deconstruction never involves or even implies the destruction ('mettre à mort') of a discourse. Instead, Derrida claims, a deconstructive reading is at once critical and productive, interrogative and transformative; this duality best articulates Derrida's own ambivalent

relationship to Freud's work. As we have seen in each of the five chapters of this thesis, what Derrida calls 'une tâche de déconstruction sans fin' involves both a positive appeal to the resourcefulness of a legacy such as psychoanalysis *and* the exploration of the limits of this legacy: 'il faut puiser dans la mémoire de l'héritage les outils conceptuels permettant de contester les limites que cet héritage a imposées jusqu'ici' (*DQD*, 39).

I have argued throughout this thesis that 'la dure loi de l'espacement' (*G*, 286) plays a critical role in Derrida's account of the relationship between inheritance and responsibility. I have foregrounded the notion of spacing in this thesis because, as I hope I have shown, it is the most persistent theoretical touchstone in Derrida's writings on Freud, from his early 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture' to his later reflections on politics and trauma in the wake of 9/11. It is also an indispensable theoretical tool in elaborating Derrida's more general theory of legacy. What Derrida calls 'un *espacement* irréductible' signifies '[le] premier mot de toute déconstruction, qui vaut aussi bien pour l'espace que pour le temps' (*LT*, 207). As we saw in Chapter 1, although spacing is valid for categories such as 'time' and 'space', it is reducible to neither. In its semantic ambiguity, spacing signifies a simultaneous spatial difference (spatialisation, externalisation) and an irrecuperable difference of temporisation (delay, deferral) which 'outdates' in advance the significance of every spatialised mark. Nevertheless —and this has been the crux of my thesis—the process of spacing is not simply a negative phenomenon, something to be overcome or repressed. It also constitutes the very possibility of the survival and productivity of the trace: 'l'espacement est un concept qui comporte aussi, quoique non seulement, une signification de force productive, positive, génératrice' (*P*, 108-9, n.).

Finally, our experience of inheritance is inextricable from a 'concept de responsabilité' (*DQD*, 18). Derrida contends that in our interpretation of a trace, we inexorably encounter responsibility in the form of a double injunction, a responsibility to the

past (which 'is' no longer but which has nonetheless left a trace for us) and to the future (in which this trace will require transformation and reinterpretation). One is always responsible 'devant ce qui vient avant soi mais aussi devant ce qui est à venir' (*DQD*, 18). This call to responsibility is itself an ethical response to the spacing which separates us both from the past and from an incalculable future to which we in turn will entrust a textual legacy. That Derrida's thinking of responsibility is a response to the phenomenon of spacing is clear from his observation in *Spectres de Marx* that 'aucune justice [...] ne paraît possible ou pensable sans le principe de quelque responsabilité, au-delà de tout présent vivant, dans ce qui disjointe le présent vivant, devant les fantômes de ceux qui ne sont pas encore nés ou qui sont déjà morts' (*SM*, 15-16). Spacing, we have seen, continually unseats the presence of the present moment. This structural out-of-jointness is the unconditional condition of all responsibility because it is this constitutive delay or difference which gives rise to the aporetic situation in which we are torn between the reaffirmation and modification of a legacy. The anxiety faced with this double bind is articulated by Derrida in relation to Freud's conceptual apparatus. He argues that

> le meilleur de l'héritage psychanalytique pourra survivre sans la métapsychologie [...]. D'où une difficulté stratégique quelquefois troublante et angoissante. On risque toujours, en disant cela, d'aller en effet au secours de ceux qui voudraient 'liquider' la psychanalyse. Je ne veux pas dire que l'oeuvre de Freud serait 'dépassée', mais je voudrais pouvoir dire ce que je suis en train de dire sans conclure que la bataille est terminée (*DQD*, 284).

This is why deconstruction has always tried to maintain 'la vertu subversive de Freud [...], aussi bien dans des textes consacrés à la psychanalyse que dans les autres' (*DQD*, 285). The ambivalence of Derrida's engagement with Freud's work stems from the difficulty of negotiating this aporia of responsibility at the heart of every inheritance of a legacy.

Although I have suggested that this theoretical framework, involving the interdependent notions of the trace, spacing, and responsibility, informs Derrida's relationship

to all of the major discourses on which his work draws, the legacy of psychoanalysis can nonetheless be said to occupy a privileged position in Derrida's thinking of inheritance. This is not only because, as we have seen, the history of Freud's French reception is exemplary of the way in which the occluding *trouble d'archive* gives rise to tenacious and often violent attempts at asserting control over a legacy that is itself irreducibly plural. It is also because the discourse of psychoanalysis provides Derrida with a number of 'outils conceptuels' (*DQD*, 39) that are vital to his own thinking of inheritance. These include, for instance, notions of indebtedness and deferred obedience (Chapter 3), concepts such as disavowal, reaction formation, and projection (for example, Freud's denial of psychoanalysis's debt to metaphysics, 2.ii), the mourning and 'working-through' of a legacy such as Marxism (examined in *Spectres de Marx*), and the patriarchal (or 'patriarchival') law that is all too easily asserted over the interpretation of a textual legacy. To take the latter example, in *Mal d'archive* Derrida concedes that his discussion of the archontic principle (3.ii.3) is indebted to Freud's reflections on the Oedipal complex and on patriarchal law in general: 'nul mieux de Freud n'a éclairé ce que nous avons appelé le principe archontique de l'archive, ce qui en elle suppose non l'*arkhé* originaire mais l'*arkhé* nomologique de la loi, de l'institution, de la domiciliation, de la filiation' (*MA*, 147-8). From these examples, then, it is clear that Freud's work plays a privileged role in Derrida's elaboration of the problem of inheritance and, as such, psychoanalysis merits close consideration in any account of Derrida's thinking of legacy.

Instead of pursuing this theoretical cross-hatching between psychoanalytic and deconstructive approaches to the question of inheritance, however, I would like to conclude by examining the correlation between the theoretical framework outlined above and the way in which Derrida's work has itself been inherited. While scholarly responses to Derrida's work since his death have been numbered in the several hundreds, two broad trends are

nonetheless discernible. On the whole, the interpretation of Derrida's legacy has been characterised by a certain repetition without difference (by those sympathetic to his project and who feel in some sense 'responsible' for his legacy) and by difference without repetition (by those who misrepresent his work and are therefore lacking in responsibility to his legacy). Both approaches are characterised by an *ad hominem* gesture, one which prioritises the proper name 'Derrida' at the expense of interrogating and reshaping the theoretical conclusions of his work.

In the wake of Derrida's death in October 2004, a significant number of scholarly treatments of his work have appeared. A considerable amount of these can be said to belong to a distinct subcategory, what might be called 'mourning texts'. Although these texts are heterogenous in their content, they are connected through the importance they attach to the process of mourning and to their inscription of personal testimony of Derrida's life and work. This categorical unity can be grasped from the similarity of their titles: *Adieu à Jacques Derrida* (Biyogo 2005); *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* (Gaston 2006); *Insister: A Jacques Derrida* (Cixous 2006); *The Late Derrida* (Balfour 2007; Davidson and Mitchell 2007); *A plus d'un titre: Jacques Derrida* (Nancy 2007); *Adieu Derrida* (Douzinas 2007); *Derrida From Now On* (Naas 2008); *For Derrida* (Miller 2009); *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Royle 2009); *Not Half No End: Militantly Melancholic Essays in Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Bennington 2010); *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida* (Kamuf 2010). In its own way, each of these texts involves a gesture of responsibility, both towards Derrida (in the personal reminiscences these studies recount) and towards the textual traces he has left for us (many undertake a scholarly *explication de texte* of these traces). That these texts involve one half of what is for Derrida always a dual call to responsibility is clear from Peggy Kamuf's observation that this genre of mourning texts represents 'less a risk of

unoriginality or repetition, [...] than a risk taken with the very name of this category, the name of Jacques Derrida' (2010: 2).

Of course, there must be scholarly debate over the meaning of Derrida's texts and the place of his work within wider contextual frameworks. At the same time, the interpretation of his corpus can only take place within new contexts which force these ideas to take on novel and unforeseeable significance. As we saw in Derrida's interview with Roudinesco, responsibility to a legacy does not consist in the simple repetition of its founding insights; there must be a reaffirmation of this legacy that involves a reshaping of these insights. If we look to Derrida's relationship to his own work, it is clear that throughout his life he was engaged in a permanent theoretical revolution of the founding concepts of deconstruction. In Derrida's writings, concepts are continually inflected and modified according to new contextual requirements, as his work shifts focus from terms such as 'différance', 'blanc, 'espacement' to later notions such as 'restance', 'spectralité', and 'autoimmunité'.[200]

While these mourning texts risk repetition without difference, the negative reception of Derrida's work in some philosophical circles risks difference without repetition, that is, the misrepresentation of his legacy. Derrida's work has been variously accused of extreme textualism, of attacking values of truth and reason, of the sophistic corruption of youth and the peddling of counterfeit non-arguments. An example of how Derrida's work has been read without responsibility can be found in Martha Nussbaum's charges against Derrida in her defence of traditional liberal arts education in *Cultivating Humanity* (1998). A key target of Nussbaum's study concerns

[200] I am speaking here only of a very general (if salient) trend in scholarly approaches to Derrida's work since his death. There have been a number of important works that do respond to Derrida's legacy in a way that reflects his thinking of responsibility as a double duty towards the past and the future. One could cite, for example, Stiegler's powerful mobilisation and interrogation of Derrida's theory of technics in his *La technique et le temps* (1994-2001) and Jean-Luc Nancy's critical use of a deconstructive framework in his 'déconstruction du christianisme' (Nancy 2005; 2010). Among Derrida's commentators, the most vocal call for a 'deconstruction without Derrida' has been made by Martin McQuillan (2009; 2012).

> forms of sophistry whose influence mars the otherwise promising pursuit of Socratic goals on our campuses. Postmodernists do not justify their more extreme conclusions with compelling arguments. Nor do they even grapple with the technical issues about physics and language that any modern account of these matters needs to confront. For this reason, their influence has been relatively slight in philosophy, where far more nuanced accounts of these matters abound.[201]

'Derrida on truth,' she continues, 'is simply not worth studying for someone who has been studying Quine and Putnam and Davidson' . Drawing on Derrida's own work, the paragraph quoted above could be subjected to close formal analysis in order to being out its own contradictory logic. The argument of Nussbaum's passage conforms, for example, to the 'illogical logic' of what Derrida calls autoimmunity. In order to immunise 'our campuses' against the threat of sophistry (that is, poor, compromised, or inexistent academic standards), Nussbaum suspends her own standards of scholarly rigour. She relies, for example, on broad types ('postmodernists'), statements that are false ('nor do they even grapple with the technical issues about [...] language'), and generalisations ('Derrida on truth' begs the question: truth in what particular sense?).

In this all too common response to Derrida's work, there is transformation without any reaffirmation and thus difference, misrepresentation, and misappropriation. According to Derrida's account of legacy, there must be a minimal gesture of generosity in every act of reading, in which the spirit of the inheritance in question is both reaffirmed and transformed: 'un moment où je déclare, le plus sincèrement du monde, l'admiration, la dette, la reconnaissance—et la nécessité d'être fidèle à l'héritage afin de le réinterpréter et de le réaffirmer sans fin' (*DQD*, 17). In the case of the so-called 'mourning texts', the focus is on responsibility to what the proper name 'Derrida' signifies. Yet in their concern for the exegesis and systematisation of Derrida's textual legacy, these texts risk a putting to death of deconstruction, an absolute fidelity that lacks the minimal betrayal necessary for the survival of every inheritance.

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[201] Nussbaum 1998: 41.

What Derrida's thinking of inheritance suggests for our inheritance of deconstruction is that we must negotiate both the Scylla of slavish repetition of Derrida's own insights and the Charybdis of rejecting his legacy outright or of disfiguring it beyond recognition. It is clear that Derrida's texts, as soon as they were published, were already outdated in advance by the irreducible process of spacing. The question posed at the outset of *Mal d'archive* —'quel avenir pour la psychanalyse à l'ère du courrier éléctronique, de la carte téléphonique, des multimédia et du CDrom?' ('Prière d'insérer')—today appears ironic. Yet the theoretical problem underlying it is an enduring one and one whose spirit must be applied to our interpretation of Derrida's legacy. Derrida's texts deserve the same scholarly rigour which he himself devoted to Freud's works, a rigour that always involves a dual responsibility towards Freud's own intentions and towards the incalculable futures of psychoanalysis.

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