

THE DRIVE TO EXHUME¹

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Vestigia in analysis

The Latin term *vestigium* means the sole of the foot, the hollow left by the passage of the one who walks on a soft earth, the imprint (e.g. ‘*vestigia ponere*’, Cic. Phil. 3, 31)². This latter notion is rich in meaning as it implies that the presence of the past is revealed in a void, which is the characteristic of the state of mourning, notably in the way archaeologists describe their work.

When Freud hesitates between the two terms ‘*Wiss oder Forschertrieb*’ (Freud 1915c) and chooses to give them as equivalents, he bases the drive to know, in this case that of the child, not on the image of an acquisition of knowledge in terms of emptiness and fullness or on that of an intellectual construction, as he might do elsewhere by comparing analysis to a game of chess, but on that of the quest for an object supposedly present but invisible to the naked eye (Freud 1911c). We must consider that the archaeological metaphor to which the term *Forscher* refers us throughout the Freudian text has indexed research, for him and for the psychoanalysts who followed him to a specific dimension, the one that I propose here under the term of the ‘drive to exhume’. The question of temporality is directly concerned in the form of the ‘posthumous’, a very particular term since it designates the person who was born after the death of his father and whose coming to life is therefore attracted by the destiny of his progenitor.

We know that time in psychoanalysis always has to do with the dimension of the posthumous in the paradoxical way it unites the living with the dead, the present with the past, not in the

¹ Part of this text has been already published in French in S. de Mijolla-Mellor, *Le besoin de savoir - Théories et mythes magico-sexuels dans l'enfance: Théories et mythes magico-sexuels dans l'enfance* (Paris : Dunod Editeur, 2002). Although the English (Standard Edition) Freud's works have been cited in the references, translations are by the author.

² *Vestigium* means the sole of the foot and by extension the trace of the sole and to walk on the soil (Gaffiot 1977: 1667).

sense of historical recognition, but in the form of reviviscency. The 'aftermath' effect, the reorganisation and inscription of the memory traces of the past in relation to the events of the present, implies for the work of analysis a perpetual return to this buried object, which nevertheless never ceases to manifest itself, alive again. I propose here, through the evocation of some of Freud's texts, to revisit the archaeological metaphor by bringing it closer to the texts of archaeologists reflecting on their methodology.

Three themes, which I will discuss in turn, support the validity of the archaeological metaphor: the materiality of the object, its authenticity, and the destruction it has suffered. These three aspects are not on the same level and I will try to show how archaeology and psychoanalysis have followed, in the historical path of their investigations, an evolution towards these three questions: materiality, authenticity and destruction. Together, they imply, perhaps, the question of origin when it is evoked in a manner which is not abstract. But I will first begin with an example of researching *vestigia*, namely Federico Fellini's film *Roma* (1972).

Discovering *vestigia*

'What is Rome? It is the ideal city towards which all desires turn'. So begins the well know film *Fellini Roma - Roma* being the anagram for *amor* - accompanied by the music of Nino Rota, strange and ancient, seeming to rise from the Acheron and prefiguring what is to come. But, because irony characterises Fellini, far from this idealistic representation, he shows us first schoolboys under the guidance of a pompous and ridiculous master who makes them take off their shoes to cross a trickle of water that flows between the stones. This is the Rubicon. '*Alea jacta est*'... they repeat submissively. The film jumps and twirls between Antiquity and modern world. A tramp mocks a statue of Caesar ('He lost his hand, and he can't wank anymore!'). There is the mixture of sex ('*La donna romana a un culo cosi!*' says one rounding off his hands in wonder), of religion (a flight of black cassocks on the white steps of St Peter's), the great food in Trastevere, truculence, spaghetti, enormous, monstrous and omnipresent mothers, oedipal and submissive sons. Then the silence falls with a flock of sheep passing by led by its shepherd at the bottom of Castel Sant'Angelo. One thinks of the opening of *Tosca*, of the Campo Vaccino before it becomes the Forum again...But modern life resumes with daylight and a monstrous traffic jam on the ring road, scenes and more scenes: a shabby music hall, the memory of wartime alerts... The viewer is left with an impression of sadness, it makes no sense, not even of beauty, and then suddenly there is a break in the narrative and the image announces, as if it were a book or an opera, '*secundo tempo*'.

There our story begins, with the image of a gigantic mammoth tusk found under the Capitol during the construction of the underground. A team of visitors goes down to inspect the construction site with the engineer in charge. Deafening noise, dust, but the young foreigners admitted to visit the construction site of the underground railway are full of excitement. They listen to the engineer explain that they had just wanted to solve an urban traffic problem, like in any other capital city, but that Rome lies on eight successive layers and that they had to transform themselves into archaeologists and even speleologists.

The tour begins on a kind of trolley that slides along a rail in an endless tunnel. ‘Where are we?’ asks one. ‘Under the Via Antica’. One imagines the sunny road above, and somewhere the tomb of Cecilia Metella. Another cart tumbles in the opposite direction; it carries motionless figures who look like models, they have just worked ten hours and are now returning to the open air. They pass in silence... One remembers the slaves in antiquity who never saw the light and worked in the underground galleries under the luminous Villa Adriana, full of memories of Hadrian, the philosopher emperor and his lover Antinous. Here we are in hell: noises, screams, inhuman machines, gigantic wheel. Suddenly someone calls out to the engineer: the detector has reported an even greater void than that of the Alban Hills, what should be done? One of the visitors begin to sweat, he feels bad, he lacks air. Does he have a premonition? The engineer decides to stop the drilling. His hand appears in close-up on the wall, reddish, which is crumbling slightly, it looks like an obstetrician trying to perceive the movements of a foetus. He smiles mysteriously: ‘There is still a void on the other side, last time it was an underground river, then a necropolis with four hundred skeletons. The archaeologists are going to make us stop everything again for two months’. He is proud and weary at the same time, as if disillusioned, exhausted by so many treasures. They decide to start probing again, but with extreme caution. The huge drill blocks the screen, it rises like a gigantic metal penis with an unbearable squeaking sound. Then it’s a miracle. Rooms with doors in a row, a statue in armour at the entrance like a guard. The drilling continues, we can only see the enormous engine, threatening. Then everything becomes black, the anguish rises and suddenly, we glimpse a fresco: white characters on a red background, a mature man goes in first, followed by other figures, they seem to look with surprise or fear. One gets the feeling that they have been watching during all the time from the other side and have been waiting for this moment for twenty centuries! The hole grows: on one side the speleologists and on the other the characters of the house as if they were reflected on the wall. One of the young visitors shouts in German: ‘Come on, Michel, we can go through there! An emotional voice off says in a breath: ‘A Roman house from 2000 years ago’. But already the lighting has changed and the

figures on the wall are covered in shadows, while the helmeted team of the living approach the gaping hole, with the noise of a violent wind that hints at danger. The camera pans over statues, bas-reliefs, frescoes of women holding hands as if in a procession or ritual dance. At the bottom of a puddle, perhaps in the peristyle, there is a wonderful mosaic of a young girl's face that resembles the one in Pompeii. A drop falls and blurs the barely seen image. The German girl is transported, but her companion rudely instructs her not to remove her mask. The faces on the frescoes look at these innocent and enthusiastic desecrators.

Then suddenly, the drama is announced: a statue of a woman' sitting, white, seen from behind (did Fellini think of the mother's skeleton in Hitchcock's *Psycho*?) then a cry: 'Hey! Come and see!' The irreparable is happening, we see a hint of white cracking a group on a fresco, it gradually widens, erasing everything in its path. The young German girl screams: "The frescoes, they are disappearing, it's the air outside! Michel! Michel! Look at this disaster! We have to do something! In despair, she strokes the wall with her hands as if hoping to hold the faces that are already fading away. The camera captures their last expression: some look as if surprised by this second death, others ironic, perhaps victorious at finding themselves elusive. With these moving images, one thinks of Virgil's line about Eurydice escaping from Orpheus:

Behold, for the second time the cruel fates call me back and my eyes close, drowned in sleep. And now, farewell! I am carried away into the immense night that surrounds me and I stretch out my helpless hands towards you, alas! I am no longer yours. She says, and out of his sight, suddenly, like smoke blending with the impalpable air, she flees to the opposite side; in vain he strove to seize shadows, he wanted to speak to her and to speak to her again; she saw him no more, and Hell's boatman did not allow him to pass again the swamp that separated them.

Virg. Georg. IV. 494-503

The emotion is total, the image returns to the cruelty of the machines and fades on the face of an anguished statue, taken over by a kind of gangrene. This film, Rome and antiquity in general, have much to fascinate psychoanalysts and make them return to this question which is at the centre of their practice.

Determining a remnant

The child's search for his origins and the sexual myths (Mijolla-Mellor 2002) he elaborates are always also dealing with the question of death. The question 'Where was I when I was not

here?’ leads directly to the other question ‘Where will I be when I will no longer be here?’. The aim of these magico-sexual myths is to interpose a phantasmatic cover over the representation that the child has of himself concerning the before and after life. As I showed in the case of a patient who remembered, in adulthood (Mijolla-Mellor 2002), having tirelessly dug in the family coal cellar in the expectation of finding his ancestors sitting on a bench as he imagined them to be, any return to the origin implies being able to invest in the representation of a ‘no longer being’, if not precisely in the state of a vestige. But such images, which may appear morbid to the adult, are not morbid to the child, because the basis of the infantile theory is cyclical: what is small grows and what is large becomes small again.

In some respects, the image of exhumation is confused with that of childbirth, of delivery, which in this case would not be that of the mother, but of the child who is born: the babies are in the mother’s body and the dead are in the earth. In both cases, it is a question of other forms of life, included existences, one might say, waiting to be born. All the iconography of the Last Judgement, from Breughel to Luca Signorelli, only illustrates this common figuration. And as for the theme of ghosts and other undead, their macabre dances continue to ensure the success of bookstores and films for young and old.

It is interesting to note that this investment in an object to be exhumed, if it belongs to the child’s sexual theorisation, also constitutes a kind of childhood for the archaeological method itself. Let us begin by mentioning what, for Freud, is the link between his archaeological fantasy and the psychoanalytical method, namely the encounter with a novel that offers him the ready-made construction, Jensen’s *Gradiva*. One remark is central to the novel, uttered by Zoe: ‘That someone must first die in order to find life... But that is probably necessary in archaeology’ (Freud SE 1907a). One would expect a more outraged conclusion to this unfinished exclamation about the absurdity of the process. But the young woman, probably accustomed to the passions of her entomologist father, is not surprised that in order to be loved she has to identify herself with an old, long dead object. Norbert Hanold’s joy lies in the realisation that his oedipal renunciation was useless and that the object is there, alive and well, and has risen from its grave. However, Freud’s comment does not consist in linking Norbert Hanold’s archaeological love delusion to his own passion for the offspring of the unconscious. It is Zoë who has the honour of embodying the character of the psychoanalyst, which consists in saying that she was able, as his remark shows, to accompany the delirium but that she will now in turn exhume its original vestiges:

The procedure that the novelist has Zoë employ to cure the delirium of her childhood friend is infinitely similar, I would even say *absolutely superimposed on* a therapeutic method that the author [Freud], together with Doctor J. Breuer, introduced into medicine in 1895 and to the perfection of which he has since devoted himself. This method, which Breuer first called 'cathartic', consists in bringing back to consciousness, so to speak, the unconsciousness whose repression causes the illness; this is what Gradiva does for the repressed memories of Hanold's childhood.

Freud 1907a

It remains that the interest of Zoë's attempts lies in the fact that she redoubles, or rather reverses, the process of exhumation: it is not she who has emerged from the earth, but it is she who will, if we are to believe Freud, bring out of the limbo of repression the vestige-object at the origin of the delusion. We can try to draw a parallel between what, to paraphrase Marx, we would call the infantile disease of theory, both in archaeology and in psychoanalysis. In both cases, it is the belief in the reality or materiality of the object to be exhumed that is at issue, and it is this belief that will be overcome at a later stage in both theories.

Archaeology

We know that archaeology has introduced a radically new dimension into history by allowing it to go beyond the relationship with the text. Until the end of the 18th century, the only source of restitution of the past was written testimony, the account of an immediate witness of the past event that had been preserved and transmitted in graphic form. The ancient remains nevertheless existed in the open air without being invested for their testimonial value but in an essentially aesthetic perspective and in a kind of piety towards the past, without constituting any kind of enigma. The same was not true of those inside the ground, however, and theories about them in the Renaissance and before are not unlike child sex theories.

Schnapp, in his article on archaeology in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Historiques* (1986), recalls that in 1416 a Polish king ordered excavations on the territory of two villages in order to demonstrate 'that the vessels were born in the earth's entrails, by the sole art of nature, without any human intervention' (Schnapp 1986: 61). In the same way, prehistoric axes were supposed to have been created by the intervention of lightning ('lightning stones') and cut flints were supposed to be petrified snake tongues. As for the proto-historic tumuli, they were swellings of earth that had become gravid. These pre-scientific interpretations are enough to make a psychoanalyst dream... Human history and genealogical filiation are repressed in favour of a

novel of origins which, like the family novel, chooses a noble ancestry, in this case telluric: the coupling of earth and sky through the intermediary of lightning, in which the reference to self-engendering, eliminating all paternal reference is particularly prominent. The earth then gives birth to vases, tumuli, etc.

It was during the Renaissance that the cult of Greco-Roman antiquities developed in Europe. Schnapp notes the power issues involved: texts were under the protection, but also the possession, of the learned (monks, royal archivists, etc.), whereas the interest in antiquities during the Renaissance was linked to a commercial expansion and became an instrument of ideological struggle. Archaeology was a way of establishing national identity, of affirming a connivance with a chosen past, which was yet another way of making the family novel work. The nineteenth century saw an archaeological revival and a veritable race for antiquities brought back as booty and stolen from their country of origin. It was in this atmosphere, which was more conducive to the creation of and trade in forgeries than to scientific reconstitution, that Freud found himself.

Another significant aspect of these early days of archaeology is that the excavators were in fact primarily looking for written documents and it was only gradually that scientific (and no longer commercial) interest shifted to textless remains, silent documents, which did not speak of the past but ‘contained’ it or bore witness to it by their form and consistency. We are therefore close to these reminiscences which, here too, do not speak for themselves, or else in an incomprehensible language, and which need to be interpreted. Like the archaeological object, the reminiscence transposed into a symptom contains the past, but remains mute about its content; the exhumed object is strange because it has become foreign due to its anachronism. However, its very silence is a guarantee of its authenticity. In this respect, it is interesting to return to what constitutes the pivotal text between archaeology and psychoanalysis, namely the ‘Gradiva’.

Gradiva

The theme of authenticity linked to the materiality of the object is constantly present. Freud’s interpretation is well known:

The problem of Gradiva’s bodily essence, which haunts him during that day, undoubtedly stems from the young man’s erotic curiosity about the woman’s body,

although he seems to be drawn into the cycle of scientific curiosity by the conscious emphasis on Gradiva's so-far-from-it oscillations between life and death.

Freud 1907a

Let us make a parenthesis here to underline the ambiguity of this passage. It is very curious that Freud, in all his commentary on Hanold's delusion, does not once speak of sublimation (a notion present as early as Manuscript L) or of desublimation, as he will do in Schreber, although everything would invite him to do so. He writes: 'His [Norbert Hanold's] scientific motivation serves as a screen for the unconscious erotic motivation, and science has placed itself entirely at the service of the delusion' (Freud 1907a). Norbert Hanold's delirium, his questions about the materiality of Gradiva as well as about her quality as a living dead woman, are the effect of a resocialisation of the drive sublimation, at least in the theories in which Freud will expound it³, admittedly four years later, in 1911 (Schreber).

But let us go back to the archaeological object turned young woman and to Freud's question: 'Is this a real ghost or a really living person?', an alternative that leaves out a third, the fact that it is a hallucination. Bringing dead (abstract) science back to life would be the motive for the hallucination: the object of desire is archaeological, not real. It concerns a long-dead woman, not a banal young German neighbour... Which Zoë, despite her first name, understands very well, hence her reply: '... I've been used to being dead for a long time' (Freud 1907a). But the dead woman, in order to be an archaeological object, should be directly under the ground; Norbert Hanold compromises: 'He recognizes that Zoë-Gradiva does not need to sink into the ground [which would have been so insane that he blushes to have believed it for a moment], but that she uses this crack to reach her tomb'. Reaching one's tomb implies that one has very momentarily escaped from it, an image that is far inferior to that of the inalterability of women made of stone or bronze. The archaeological object provides material proof of immortality, the negation of time and its decay and, in this sense, is truly akin to the unconscious and its indestructible contents.

Reconstructing the remains from their absence

In archaeology, there is a shift from the notion of a significant object to be exhumed to an interest in its constitution in terms of a set or whole that allows us to determine its absence, that is to say, its presence but in the past. This shift could be compared to the one that takes

³ I have proposed a different content for the notion of sublimation in order to differentiate it more clearly from intellectualisation. See Mijolla-Mellor (2009).

place between the initial cathartic method and constructions in the analysis. In both cases, it is striking to note that the interest is no longer focused on an object, the goal of the investigation, but extends to a set of details. Raymond Bloch writes: 'The work of the archaeologist is a labour of long patience' (Bloch 1986: 206). Improvisation and haste must be strictly excluded. For amateurs and the general public, the profession of an archaeologist appears, above all, in the light of the joy of discovery; it is indeed the moment when the scholar is rewarded for his efforts. But for those who have spent a long-time prospecting in the field, and whether there is observation and research, or discovery, the work is above all a matter of meticulousness, patience and method. The excavation field is an open-air laboratory. The profession is learned little by little through long training and no theoretical manual will ever replace the experience slowly acquired in the field. The excavation, thus becomes a gradual stripping of the ground through which it is possible to trace the history of the site step by step. The stratigraphic method makes it possible to distinguish the different layers and strata with the greatest possible precision and to determine their succession and chronology. 'The entire unwritten history of mankind is inserted into the superimposed pages of the book of the earth, and the technique of excavation has the primary aim of ensuring a correct reading' (Leroi-Gourhan 1986: 221). This, of course, evokes Freud's representation of memory as archival files containing psychic inscriptions, but the way in which the archaeological method most resonates for the psychoanalyst is, certainly, in an interest in the absence of an element. In archaeology, this absence is signalled by a very slight modification, by something that is not an object but the trace of the fact that it may have been there in a given area before disappearing. These are what archaeologists call ghost sites, which are sometimes revealed only by an abnormal colouring (or discolouration) of the ground that indicates the past presence of habitats or buildings that have now disappeared.

Even more obvious, of course, is the case of those bodies destroyed at Pompeii which left cavities in the ground corresponding to their shapes. By filling these cavities with plaster, striking casts have been obtained that show the pain of the agony of these figures. This is a fascinating example of conservation through absence, which appears as a foreclosure, a blank, which is not to be exhumed but reconstructed by relying solely on the borders. The fact that these are images of extreme suffering meets, by chance, the link that one would be led to make with the method of the analyst when it is confronted with the unspeakable in psychosis.

A comparison of the archaeologist's and the psychoanalyst's approach, taking into account the evolution of their respective methods, shows that both have moved in the direction of

increasing abstraction: psychoanalysis, by gradually abandoning the reference to the reality of the traumatic scene (but Freud will never completely give it up, as we know), in favour of the construction of a 'version' of personal history, and archaeology by extending its interest far beyond the material objects exhumed from the excavations to a reconstitution in terms of structures. Leroi-Gourhan writes in 'L'Histoire sans textes':

The dissection of a deposit is by no means a job of recovering objects that could be entrusted to a few manoeuvres with a trained eye. It is very exactly the establishment of the text and all the study that follows from it is only of value through this initial reading.

Leroi-Gourhan 1986: 221

In 1937, in 'Constructions in Analysis', Freud will propose an analysis of the analyst's work which is as close as possible to this evolution proper to both the archaeological method and that of analysis, and where it is no longer a question of recovering an object, but of reconstituting its absence:

His work of construction or, if one prefers, of reconstruction presents a profound resemblance to that of the archaeologist who unearths a destroyed and buried dwelling, or a monument of the past. In essence, it is the same, with the only difference that the analyst operates under better conditions and has more material resources at his disposal because his efforts are directed at something that is still alive and not at an object that has been destroyed, and perhaps for another reason. However, just as the archaeologist reconstructs the walls of the building from sections of wall still standing, determines the number and position of the columns from cavities in the floor, and reconstructs the decorations and paintings that once adorned the walls from remains found in the debris, so the analyst draws his conclusions from the snippets of memories, associations and active statements of the analysand. Both retain the right to reconstruct by completing and assembling the preserved remains. In both cases, many of the difficulties and sources of error are the same. It is well known that the determination of the relative age of a find is one of the most delicate tasks of archaeology and, if an object appears in a certain layer, it is often difficult to decide whether it has always belonged to that layer or whether it has reached such a depth through a later disturbance. What, in analytical constructions, corresponds to this doubt is easy to guess.

Freud 1937d

Later, Winnicott takes up this consideration of dating in the difference he proposes between early and deep:

‘Early’ does not mean ‘deep’... It takes a child’s life and development before the deep appears, so that when we go to the deepest, it is not the beginning that we meet; it is something like the third year, or the second or the eighteenth month.

Winnicott 2000: 98

Can the object be exhumed without destroying it?

When addressing the Rat Man, Freud is clear on this point:

In the following session, he showed great interest in my explanations, but allowed himself to express some doubts: in what way could the explanation that remorse and guilt were justified have a curative effect? I reply that it is not the explanation itself that has this effect, but the fact of finding the unknown content to which the remorse is attached. ‘Yes, that’s exactly what my question was about’. I briefly explain to him the psychological differences between the conscious and the unconscious, the wear and tear that everything that is conscious undergoes, while the unconscious remains relatively unalterable, by showing him the antiques in my office. These objects come from burials; it is thanks to the burial that these objects have been preserved. Pompeii is only now falling into ruin, since it has been dug up. ‘Can one foresee with certainty,’ the patient asks me, ‘how one will behave towards the recovered thoughts? For one would be able to overcome remorse, while another might not?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘it is in the nature of these things that the affect is overcome during the work itself. Contrary to what happens with Pompeii, which we try to preserve, we want to get rid of such painful ideas at all costs.’

Freud 1909d

And yet, was it not the same Freud who wrote in ‘Gradiva’:

The repression that makes the psychic both unapproachable and keeps it intact cannot indeed be better compared to the burial as it was in the fate of Pompeii to undergo it and out of which the city can be reborn under the work of the spade.

Freud 1937d

As an historian remarked:

What took a very long time to understand was that excavation is an irreparable destruction, and that it cannot be carried out without preparation and a minimum of tactile and visual skills. The layers of an archaeological site are like a book that one reads, destroying each page as one reads; it cannot be copied because this book of earth is multi-dimensional: it must be observed from as many angles as possible, at the most frequent moments of its disappearance, in order to be sure of being able to reconstitute its external and internal aspects at all the levels that one will have recognised.

Duval 1986: 266

In fact, whereas the wear and tear of Pompeii is progressive, here it is the excavation itself that is destructive because it disorganises, erases and blurs the traces. Hence the difficulty of the work, as there is no going back. No matter how much time has passed and how many precautions the archaeologist takes, the moment of discovery is decisive because it is both a revelation and a destruction of the object.

The comparison that Freud proposes to the Rat Man becomes all the more invalid. The work of perlaboration (*Durcharbeitung*) can involve, thanks to repetition, a wearing away of the pathological mechanisms whenever the interpretation reveals their presence *hic et nunc*. On the other hand, no interpretation has ever made anything disappear, except perhaps the arrangements between the traces that the interpretation, always partial, obscures by constructing a new official narrative. But we are still far from the fantasy of omnipotence on which the *Interpretation of Dreams* opens (*Afflavit et dissipati sunt*). One might also wonder how the patient could feel the presence of the ancient statuettes that were supposed to represent his unconscious, but which were obviously carefully preserved! It is in fact only later, in two texts almost ten years apart, that we find the theme of the destruction of the exhumed object taken up and developed. From *Civilization and its Discontents* (Freud 1930a) to 'Constructions in Analysis' (Freud 1937d), Freud's perspective could be summarised as follows: the individual's past, or more precisely his psychic past, is buried like archaeological remains. Their unburial tells us not only that this past existed, but that it was itself structured in a history, with stages, strata, etc. But the psychic past, unlike the archaeological remains, has not been mutilated. 'The essential is entirely preserved,' writes Freud in 1937. And a little further on, with a confidence that makes one dream: '... It is a simple question of analytical technique than to determine whether what has been hidden will be fully revealed' (ibid.).

Contrary to what most often happens, it is at the end of the book that Freud makes the most radical statement in this respect, as a more precise rereading of the passages concerned shows. In Freud's fresco of the construction of Rome, the comparison between the Eternal City and the psyche evokes the notion of stages of development. The question of preserving the past thus implies being able to look back not only on what has been (in this case, has been built stage by stage), but also to find traces of the successiveness of evolution: 'Let us ask ourselves rather what a visitor, equipped with the most complete historical and topographical knowledge, would be able to find today of these primitive stages' (Freud 1930a).

However, what will prevent the visitor from following the progression of the constructions backwards in time is precisely that this progression has not stopped. Time continues, but the place, the space, remains the same. So we are not dealing with a juxtaposition but with a metamorphosis, and the debris of ancient Rome appears drowned in the chaos of a city that has never stopped transforming and growing. And Freud, after a fabulous kaleidoscopic description of an imaginary Rome where everything has been preserved, concludes: 'We are far from being able to grasp by means of visual images the characteristics of the life of the mind' (Freud 1930a). So, we should not accept the comparison of 'the past of a city' with 'the past of a soul', but Freud seems to abandon this metaphor only reluctantly. Freud hastens to point out that the same would be true for any comparison involving spatiality: 'it is impossible to detect the embryo in the adult, the thymus possessed by the child has been replaced after puberty by connective tissue, the gland itself no longer exists' (Freud 1930a). Of course, the archaeological metaphor does not serve the same purpose in these two cases, but Freud is nevertheless closer to archaeological reality when he addresses *The Rat Man*, and it can be assumed that, like everyone else, he had been struck by the contradiction between the fulfilment of the desire to see and the destruction to which this curiosity exposes the object. It is the myth of Orpheus that is illustrated here.

Once again, as the discussion of the atemporality of unconscious processes had shown, Freud disjoins the *a priori* Kantian frameworks of time and space. But whereas he had argued that unconscious processes ignore time and that the psyche is extended, though it knows nothing of it, here it is precisely the a-spatiality of the psyche that makes conservation possible, and, since there is no unity of place, succession can take place without one stage having to destroy another in order to take hold. Freud is, however, still hypothetical in this regard in 1929:

‘Perhaps we should be content to pretend that the past *can* be perpetuated in the soul, that it is not *necessarily* exposed to destruction’ (Freud 1930a). In 1937, in ‘*Constructions in Analysis*’, he would take up these questions, stressing essentially three points:

The temporality proper to analysis differs from that of the historian because it is the living and present time of the transference, even if this present time is also a ‘time mixed’ with the past: ‘We have said,’ writes Freud,

that the analyst works under better conditions than the archaeologist because he also has at his disposal material that is not similar to that of the excavations, for example, the repetitions of reactions going back to the first ages of childhood and all that the transference brings to light during such repetitions. But it must also be borne in mind that the archaeologist is dealing with destroyed objects, large and important parts of which have undoubtedly been lost through mechanical violence, fire or looting. No effort will be made to find them and assemble them with the preserved remains. One is reduced to reconstruction alone, which, as a result, often cannot exceed a certain degree of verisimilitude.

Freud 1937d

The comparison between the technique of the analyst and that of the archaeologist is only valid if we place ourselves in exceptionally favourable conditions of exhumation, where the years that have passed have in fact protected the object by covering it up.

It is quite different with the psychic object, whose prehistory the analyst wants to collect. Here, what happens regularly in the case of the archaeological object has only occurred in exceptionally favourable circumstances, as in Pompeii or in the tomb of Tutankhamun. The essential is entirely preserved, even what seems completely forgotten still remains in some way and in some place, but buried, inaccessible to the individual. As we know, it is doubtful whether any psychic formation can really undergo total destruction.

Freud 1937d

Finally, the metaphor of the material object reappears, modified, it is true, by the assertion that there is no common measure between the nature of these two objects: psychic and archaeological.

It is a simple question of analytical technique to determine whether one will succeed in making fully apparent what has been hidden. There are only two facts that oppose this extraordinary privilege of analytical work: the psychic object is incomparably more complicated than the material object of the archaeologist, and our knowledge is not sufficiently prepared for what we have to find, because the intimate structure of its object still conceals many mysteries.

Freud 1937d

Suzanne Bernfeld (1951) reminds us that Freud placed the greatest value on those of his archaeological relics that were least destroyed. It is certain that the emotion that seizes the spectator in front of the Charioteer of Delphi with its fixed gaze and its mysterious smile is not related to the one he may feel in front of the Winged Victory of Samothrace for example. In addition to the emotion, there is the almost hypnotic gripping of this testimony to what each of us persists in believing, i.e., the non-existence of death. All our efforts to convince ourselves of the reality of death never dent our unconscious certainty and are pulverised for a moment, in the ‘uncanny’ of the return of the known that has become unrecognisable to our conscious logic.

I would say that therein lies the very foundation of the possible investment of any analysis on the part of the patient and on the part of the analyst. The seizure in front of what emerges: forgotten words, sudden transferential expressions, a sudden rapprochement, an exhumed memory is only such because at the moment of emergence the object appears unmutated, intact, abolishing time in its resurrection.

We can doubt that, as Bernfeld writes, archaeology represents for Freud a ‘mastery of death’ and consider rather that, for him as for everyone else, it offers a negotiable access for the psyche to the representation of death (Bernfeld 1951: 125). This representation has the function of masking death at the very moment when it reveals it, because it is precisely the presence of a mutilated or whole object that closes off the unrepresentable of nothingness. To a lesser degree, Freudian archaeological imagery, which concerns cities or statues or objects, avoids the materiality of decomposition, whereas the discolouration of earth, previously mentioned in relation to stratigraphic techniques, is much closer to it, the materiality of loose earth evoking that of flesh. For this reason, we should not speak of a mutilated object but of a decomposed object, i.e., one that has lost its original materiality. Conversely, Freud’s

hypotheses on the conservation of mnemonic traces, their fixation on words or images allows, as the clinic shows, that they are exhumed, mutilated certainly, but not decomposed. Using a very particular vision of archaeology as a negation of the work of death, Freud presents us with the analogy of the psychoanalyst's method with that of the archaeologist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the drive to exhume, as we have developed it, at the interface between archaeology and psychoanalysis, can be compared to Freud's constant concern to be able to give proof of the validity of the approach to analysis and its contents. Three main aspects summarise this reference to archaeology and the unburial it implies:

1. The reference to an object in its materiality, as opposed to a text or an idea. This is what makes archaeology as well as psychoanalysis fascinating and its 'uncanny' aspect, the return of the living that was thought to be dead, the walking of ghosts, the exhibition of what should have remained hidden. If sharing the 'drive to exhume' can sustain the undertaking of the cure, for the patient and the analyst, reciprocally, not being able to invest the anguish it implies is very often what determines the premature interruption of a cure or the impossibility of deciding, after the few preliminary meetings, to begin it. As we have seen, materiality can be reduced to the absence or discolouration of the earth in archaeology, and in an equally subtle way, it is revealed in the cure, which gives it all the more intensity. On the contrary, exhuming a well-defined object is in a way reassuring, because it is the blurring of the contours that makes the process uncertain, even worrying.
2. The reference to an authentic object. Unlike a narrative, which is always liable to be biased or inaccurate, an archaeological object has objective evidence. It is valid, independently of the discourse held on it, or so it is believed. In the same way, the fantasy of going back to 'real' scenes in psychoanalysis and deriving therapeutic efficacy from them is linked to this same preoccupation of finding a firm ground, a truth, even if it is in the form of a nucleus or a fragment.
3. The reference to a mutilated and deformed object because it is cluttered with secondary concretions which have agglomerated in more recent times, is an aspect developed in '*Constructions in Analysis*'. The two phases of archaeological research are confronted with this particularity of the object, which requires firstly the phase of probing, where

the excavator locates the object as a whole (e.g. the enumeration of the layers in a chronological perspective), and secondly the phase of stripping, which is carried out layer by layer in order to ensure that the preserved structures can be seen (traces of the perimeter of a fight, the layout of a burial site, etc.).

The two operations must necessarily be successive, hence the archaeologist's practice of preserving a sort of pillar or vertical section that escapes the stripping operation and makes it possible to maintain a chronological vision of the whole throughout the second stage. This to-and-fro between the detailed vision of a singular element and the global vision of the history of a subject is found in the analyst's work of thought, which is perpetually solicited by these two aspects. The practice of interpretation is perhaps summed up in the link that the analyst establishes, and communicates, between them. Once again, as the discussion of the a-temporality of unconscious processes had shown, Freud disjoins the a priori Kantian frameworks of time and space, while he had argued that unconscious processes ignore time and that the psyche is extended. But whereas he had argued that unconscious processes ignore time and that the psyche is extended, even though it knows nothing of it, here it is precisely the a-spatiality of the psyche that makes conservation possible, since there is no unity of place, succession can take place without one stage having to destroy another in order to take hold.

Sigla

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