

# Linking psychoanalysis and historiography in the “controlled use of anachronism”

Alice Pechriggl, Universität Klagenfurt

Nicole Loraux chose a contested path by declaring herself a partisan of a certain kind of anachronism; one that she called controlled anachronism. Something similar is true of her use of psychoanalysis as an instrument in historiography. Before I go deeper into the field where these two “methods” intersect, I must be more precise, as in a first attempt we can hardly speak of methods in a strict epistemological sense; instead, the term should be understood in a more general, etymological sense as an approach. Some intuitive notions only slowly become concepts through reflection and logical precision, step by step, new paths become marked ways for more systematic investigation; but in historiography and historical anthropology they never lead to final scientific precision of any kind (and, as we have known since Gödel, Heisenberg or Schrödinger, in mathematics and physics, too, the case is often the same). This does not mean that systematic and precise investigation has been superseded or should be neglected, on the contrary! Philological, even lexical precision; a certain, new kind of “positivism” regarding the words and their composition in a text, its layers and structures; a systematic view of relations between different structures, layers, kinds or genres of texts is even more important in the midst of what is, at times, the scarce determinability we encounter in the field of history, ancient as well as modern. If we neglect this work as philosophers we risk falling back into idealistic hermeneutics, and for historians of philosophy the risk is even greater: we are well aware of the crucial it was to critique their religious and ideological leanings, especially in the interpretation of Plato<sup>1</sup>.

The (social) imaginary, as it was called by many historians of the “school of Paris” in ancient history, is first of all what the Greek-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Castoriadis first conceived of as the human representations and phantasms that, through the process of institution, became (and are still becoming) our rather effective world of significations within which everything makes sense to us and without which there is neither sense nor signification. This concept, together with the concept of magma, opens an ontological as well asgnoseological “space” and mode of being in which *peras* and *apeiron* are always – more or less symmetrically – intertwined. By adopting and developing this concept of imaginary from the field of ancient history (but also from medieval history, for example, as Duby and Le Goff did), French historians became more inclined to delve deeper into the psyche, especially the unconscious dimensions of historic phenomena. As Herbart and Freud first pointed out, the psyche is multilayered, *ge-schichtet*, from a diachronic as well as from a structural perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> For a rather radical critique of the political-ideological kind of hermeneutic “freedom of interpretation”, see Orozco 1995.

According to Freud, time does not exist in or for the unconscious. From a philosophical perspective, this is not at all certain. What can be conceded is that the “ordinary” time of our waking consciousness (*Wachbewusstsein*) has no validity in the unconscious, especially in/for the dimension known as the “id” (*Es*). Taking this into consideration, Nicole Loraux’s use of anachronism is entirely appropriate for elucidating the ancient world and imaginary (rather than intrinsically reproducing the inherited hermeneutics of both). Moreover, what she has called a “controlled use” includes all of these conceptual instruments of historiography.

There is, however, something else that must be included: the courage of transcending methodological, disciplinary and epistemological dogma from a void, without an a priori stand-point or foundation. This courage, the staunch mounting of resistance and theoretical surmounting of such resistance, is what seems to me one of most interesting and encouraging aspects in the work of Nicole Loraux (and in the work of the so-called School of Paris)<sup>2</sup>. In his autobiography, Pierre Vidal Naquet wrote that Nicole Loraux, together with Marcel Detienne, Jean-Pierre Vernant and himself, the *Mousquetaires*, was d’Artagnan<sup>3</sup>. Such a comparison speaks for itself, yet also intertwined in it are important unutterable, even unquestionable aspects. D’Artagnan was part and parcel, but he was at the same time *à part*, distanced. Such a position provides an orientation for what I will attempt to explain. For Pierre Vidal-Naquet, it meant also, as he wrote, that he admired her courage. Courage helps not only in getting through difficulties, but also in “contain” the critique, in Loraux’s case, the critique from her older male colleagues, which focused particularly on gender, corporality and an appropriated use of psychoanalysis (Vernant, for instance, preferred a structural, more conventional and seemingly less controversial “psychological” approach). When I said “containing” with reference to the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion I also alluded to the ability to further develop the criticized approach by integrating those parts of the critique that are not mere rejection, but rather, constructive inputs. Thus, the term “use” instead of “application” of psychoanalysis marks such a reflexive development.

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<sup>2</sup> For PhD candidates in “Philosophy and Social Sciences” these scholars, together with Castoriadis, Derrida and some others, like Yan Thomas, constituted the highly creative core of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the leaving of this generation, one of the most innovative postgraduate schools became an almost ordinary academic institution; something analogous is true of the journal *Annales*, which was founded in a transdisciplinary and heterodox spirit, and which, once established, refused for example one of the most interesting articles Nicole Loraux has written by comparing Korkyra 427 and the (Commune of) Paris 1871 (Loraux 1993a). The “reason” given for the refusal: anachronism. But – and this is the irony of history – the refusal was for her the occasion for further developing her approach.

<sup>3</sup> Vidal-Naquet 1998: 232.

Another area of controversy is “anachronism,” which is also “to be used” methodologically (rather than occurring without contemplation or intelligible and methodological planning). The limit between righteous and less righteous historiography is accordingly to be found between the use and the abuse of anachronism; between practicing and not practicing anachronism at all. But it could be also interesting *in which ways* this *limes / peras* (and at the same time *topos*) between a historiography that is “righteous” and one that is not with all its psychic implications, is part of the social and cultural imaginary of academic historians. The mainstream academic “psychological” approach leaves out the psychic dimension of the investigator in her encounter with the text/author/s. Her field of investigation is supposed to be separate and her logos investigates and “talks” about and over the psyche (as the supposed traces or condensations of affects) in the textual/cultural/structural. A psychoanalytic approach is meant to take this encounter into account. It is an encounter that can be treated not only in the register of transference and counter-transference, but epistemologically in terms of a constitutive uncertainty principle in cultural and anthropological studies. In this way, it can be seen as a larger imaginary space of sensitive as well as intuitive meditation, reflection, transference, conflict and – last but not least – ana/logical analysis. Merely theoretical use of psychoanalytical concepts and *topoi* can be very fruitful, but such uses remain psychological in the former sense, without becoming themselves, psychoanalytical: they lack the experience, *Er-fahrung* of the effects of affect – and of psychoanalysis, in oneself and in the others to whom we may listen, to whom we “lend an ear”<sup>4</sup>.

Nicole Loraux was in-between, *metaxu*, as she was working and perceiving in a transversal way, crossing the limits of *diairesis* without ever falling into fixed dichotomy (not to sever, *trancher*, was one of her main epistemological maxims, which some may have criticized as too radical a scepticism). Since she, herself, underwent psychoanalysis and

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<sup>4</sup> Only after Freud’s death the (conscious and unconscious) counter transference of the analyst became an always more explicitly discussed phenomenon which helped to understand the other, his/her discourse and affectivity, the gap and/or linking between them as well as between “manifest and latent,” the instances etc. In group analysis, to which I will come later on, Foulkes created the concept of resonance for the “kind of” counter/transference being effective in groups. Going further on, one could say, that all affective and representational phenomena (conscious as well as unconscious) in a specific group or in the social-historical as such manifests itself – in one way or the other – in the group imaginary respectively in the social imaginary. It is without saying that the former is always embedded in the social imaginary, which itself has no clear limits separating it from the imaginary of another society. Nonetheless our imaginary has few to do with the imaginary of Greeks so that the anachronism-argument is always more or less valid and at the same time void of sense.

worked together with clinicians<sup>5</sup>, her use of psychoanalytical concepts was not limited to theory. The same is true of her active participation in theater and in philosophy. Not only by analysing Plato and Aristotle (who she considered a better, less ideological historian than Thucydides), she herself entered into philosophy (rather than merely being married to a philosopher, Patrice Loraux).

By choosing the path of heterodoxy, even of paradox, in a discipline like Hellenic studies, one has to display even greater courage. Not only because of academic pressure and arrogance, which concern the specific social and cultural aspects of “anxiety and method” in the words of Devereux<sup>6</sup>. In terms of the psyche as the other crucial dimension of methodology and one's attitude towards the limits and constraints of the discipline, I would even venture to say that an attraction to anxiety is necessary to gather the courage to affront the walls of such disciplines. Courage comes not only through external occasions: the *kairos* has to be perceived as such, by ourselves, insofar as we participate in the creation of a *kairos* as the decisive moment or occasion for our decision (or for a change in our health, like in Hippocrates, political world like in Aristotle, perception etc.). It is an effect as well as a condition of the attitude of taking a risk; *à nos risques et périls* – to say it in French – we speak, we write and we transgress limits, which too often are still valid for the simple reason that nobody has had either the courage or the will to question them.

As a philosopher, I should be used to this kind of experience as the “method” of philosophy is exactly that of not having one determinate method; it is, instead, a somehow systematic creation of new approaches, *methodoi*, and concepts in order to find answers for new questions or for some very old questions that appear from new perspectives. The new fields of investigation and questioning opened up by philosophy always go together with new approaches, even concerning the principles of something apparently stable such as rational understanding, or *Verstand* in a Kantian sense. (In academic philosophy this attitude is, in many ways, repressed.) This re/figuration and re/questioning of and through philosophy can be found as a central motivation in the work of Nicole Loraux, not only in her Tiresias-book<sup>7</sup>. This makes her not only a classicist, but also a philosopher of history, much more so than many philosophers who believe themselves able to conceive history through ideas alone, without studying the phenomena, institutions and other “details” constituting history.

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<sup>5</sup> Gaudillière 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Devereux 1967. His rather bad ancient “historiography” and psychoanalysis applied upon Sappho as patient (with depressive anxiety) does not necessarily invalidate his psychoanalytical insights into methodology.

<sup>7</sup> Loraux 1989.

I remember the first seminar of Nicole Loraux that I attended at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS). It was in 1988. At the beginning of the seminar she proposed a “methodological” lecture from a text not common among historians and philologists at the time (and even now): Freud’s *The Man Moses and Monotheism*, an early text that Freud did not publish for many years fearing it might further harm his fellow Jews who were already the victims of a reinforced anti-Semitism propagated by Viennese mayor Karl Lueger. This text became his work in progress *par excellence*, a perpetual construction site. Freud published it only shortly before his death, in exile in London, on the brink of World War II, which was also *the war against the Jews*.

What Nicole Loraux wanted us to be aware of was the way in which Freud used his speculative thoughts, transforming them into historiographical hypothesis from a psychoanalytical perspective. This reading could not succeed without understanding the risks; after all, we are meant to be well aware that after Herodot and onward from Thucydides, legends were banned from serious historiography. But the story of Moses told by Freud was indeed a *mythos*; a legend or an invented story, like theater plays or fantasy novels, like Plato’s approaches to the “not (yet) intelligible.” Well, it was exactly the legend, like the dream of the theater, in short, the fantasizing or imagining capacity that had to be at the core of our interest. Nicole Loraux did not render every didactic intention explicitly at the time (and she also did not even do so afterwards), but in this case I suppose that she wanted us to include this dimension into our thinking and theorizing in order to be more resistant to the ideologies of the *polis*, in order to better understand the imaginary of the Athenians or the Greeks – Greek males to be precise. But, in light of the diploma of advanced studies (DEA) she inaugurated at the school under the title “modern uses of antiquity,” resisting also means “resisting the ideologies of the *polis*” and, simultaneously, “resisting the ideologies of the contemporary city, and scientific community.”

Here is the moment for a closer look at the relation between psychoanalysis and historiography. For this purpose, I will open up the semantic field of *theatron*. In a first step I should revisit Aristotle’s theory of theater (where *theorein* is to be understood in its polysemic, not only in its epistemic or even onto/logical sense). It is well known that one of the central concepts in this theory is *katharsis*, which is a kind of affective purification or purgation. This mainly medical metaphor is, for its part, related to Aristotle’s specific concept of *mimêsis*, differing from Plato’s<sup>8</sup>. We can find both in the first forms of psychoanalytic cure and its theory of the *kathartische Methode*. It meant a certain kind of repeating (“repeating and elaborating,” “*Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten*”). Returning to theater and *Poetics*, the spectator not only perceives the drama, he enters into it through a triple *mimêsis* (at least...): the drama itself as a double *mimêsis*, that is the performing on stage of a story that is already the specific

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<sup>8</sup> See also Papadopoulou 2006.

*mimêsis* of a chain of possibly lived events, and through the spectators' mimetic effort to re-present, that is also to mime the drama in/through his *aisthêsis* and *phantasia* (and implicitly also through his memory). This *mimêsis* in/by the spectator, which leads to the *katharsis* is first of all an emotional one and only in a second step an intellectual one<sup>9</sup>. The spectator becomes the actors and the drama (*pros ti*, in a certain regard or to a certain extent). I would even say that Aristotle sees the spectator becoming/re-enacting the entire *mise-en-scène* (not only the *opseôs kosmos* as Aristotle also calls the optical *mise-en-scène* but the whole representation of the drama). We could admit a kind of etymological ground for such a view in the extensive sense of *theatron* (spectators, rather than theater as a specific space in the *polis* and the whole spectacle; throughout the epochs and languages: in German, and especially in Viennese German, we say "to make a theater" for "making a mess.") This complex *mimêsis* should enable the spectators not only to empathize but also to re-enact. Only both aspects lead into *katharsis* of affects such as pity and anxiety (or fear): *eleos kai phobos*. Such a discharge is not necessary to dissolve private symptoms (e.g., of hysterical conversion), but in order to clear minds, also – so I would hypothesize – for better political deliberation in the *ecclesia*. Rather than saying – like Nicole Loraux – that Aristotle failed to see the political element in the Tragedy,<sup>10</sup> I would like to recall that in *Politics* (1341b) he not only mentions the "word" *katharsis* but he refers to his whole concept as exposed in *Poetics*. If he thought the role of *katharsis* (and the meaning he gave to it in *Poetics*) worthy of mention in the eighth book of *Politics*, we can hardly maintain his presumed disinterest in the political dimensions of the tragedy. I would even say that Aristotle knew quite well about the political function of the tragic *katharsis* and probably also of *mimêsis*. He thereby opened the gaze to the deeper sense of political deliberation and to the inhibiting effects of certain states of affectivity in this specific kind of human praxis (one which is related strongly to passion and affectivity in general).

Now, whereas the deliberation in the *ecclesia* is a purely male affair, purified of "feminine" affects (such as pity and fear, etc.), these affects, which are to be re-enacted by the spectators, are affects of women *and* men, written by men and "enacted" by male actors for men (mostly or exclusively). On the other end of the spectrum, psychoanalytic catharsis *in actu* was the invention of a woman, Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim), who felt the associative

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<sup>9</sup> The artificial and probably much too superficial debate over the correct translation of *phobos* and *eleos* as affects (anxiety and misery, *Jammer*) or as emotions (fear and pity) is irresolvable for the simple reason that the whole experience of the drama as an anachronistic event *par excellence* must be seen as the oscillation between affect in the strong and invasive sense of *pathos* on the one hand, and emotion in the sense of a mediated and minimally reflected *pathos* on the other.

<sup>10</sup> Loraux 1973: 913. Since the catharsis is not only an emotion but the negativity of an affect (discharge through acting out), I would even say that it is, instead, the contrary, but on a very subtle, almost group analytic level.

discharge into Freud's ears as liberation of enchained affects. She designated this discharge herself with the English words "chimney sweeping" (Nicole Loraux was well aware of the unconscious confusion between analogy and identity concerning orifices or "complementary zone-object, *objet-zone complémentaire*" in the words of the psychoanalyst Piera Aulagnier whom Nicole had read). The words only (and not the melody or the *opseôs kosmos*) are central in this created "scene" in which the entire phenomenon took form in Freud's spirit: precisely as catharsis<sup>11</sup>. The cathartic method thus became the core of psychoanalytic technique.

In order to be certain that it was not merely by chance that Freud called his method first by the name of an Aristotelian concept, we should first reread *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where Freud takes up several "archaic" metaphysical and categorical questions: What is a dream? In which ways does it come into being? By which means does it come to representation? What are the logics in, between and behind the manifest content of a dream? And it was also in reference to Aristotelian metaphysics that Freud called his own theoretical enterprise "metapsychology." Last but not least, and in order to render explicit Freud's reference to Aristotle, we can read again the short text on the "Psychopathic Person on Stage," an unpublished text that Freud wrote in 1905/6<sup>12</sup>.

The relating of the psychopathic and the dramatic scene of this text begins with a reference to the concept of catharsis in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The term *mimêsis* or its (platonic) translation in German, *Nachahmung*, does not occur, but in describing the affectation of the spectators through "*Identifikation*" he refers to a specific sense of *mimêsis*. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and throughout the entire Freudian work, we repeatedly read how greatly identification in its psychoanalytic sense and *mimêsis* in the Aristotelian sense are intertwined, sometime even synonymous.

## ***From mimesis to anaclisis and back: vicissitudes of anachronism***

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<sup>11</sup> It is known and attested by Freud himself that his education in classical studies in secondary school (at the *Waser gymnasium* in Vienna) was a main foundation for his discovery of psychoanalysis. Aristotle was rarely an explicit source (unlike Plato), but very often an implicit one, and we know how much attention Freud gave to these latter sources and influences on his thought.

<sup>12</sup> Freud 1942. It was published only posthumously, in English, in 1942 and the *Gesammelte Werke* still do not include this text.

In working with Nicole Loraux and Cornelius Castoriadis about the imaginary, I attempted to discover more traces of the body in the midst of the imaginary, traces of the “flesh” to put it in phenomenological terms, or of the somatic to put in more general terms. As already mentioned, this representational layer was conceptualized by Castoriadis as the socially invented, but nonetheless effective world of (imaginary) significations and ideas. It is not only to be seen in contrast to the more somatic layer of drives and affects, but both are intertwined in different ways and manners, the most important of which is *anaclisis* in a Freudian sense. How is the specific relation between psyche and soma forged with regard to their first differentiation emerging with the first figuration (*Ausgestaltung*) of the psyche, its partial detachment from the somatic? The beginning of a human being’s life in the world is marked by the “psychosomatic” imagination forging the scheme of all further representations by and through *anaclisis* (leaning on, *Anlehnung*, *étayage*) and borrowing (*Entlehnung*, *emprunt*): representation and imagination are leaning on – and in a creative way “imitating” – the metabolism of the organism as a complex and multilayered matrix of transfiguration. Aulagnier has used the notion of *emprunt* (borrow) for her description of this first figuration of schemes worked out by the somatically rooted and modeled psyche. Through these somatic schemes, the psyche represents and organizes the *mise-en-scène*, first of itself for itself and what will be more and more distinguishable for her as the psyche’s other, the “own” body with its needs first.

The somatic plays a productive role in the creation of representational schemes, first of all, the spatial schemes. This concerns the topology of the inner space of schemes organizing the psyche or the spirit, but also concerns the topic of the outer, environmental space. Secondly, the somatic plays a transcendental role in the creation of the schemes of temporality, which are “leaning on” (*anaclisis*) somatic rhythms, such as the heartbeat, the cerebral fluxes and movements and the time of satiety, which commands the rhythms of pleasure and displeasure, etc.

In order to look more closely at the affective dimensions in or related to the imaginary, I will discuss in greater detail the temporality of the *mise-en-scène* of the social imaginary. I will do this by looking at the “*télescopage*” between ancient and modern catharsis. *Télescopage* (literally bumper-to-bumper crash) is a concept Aulagnier has forged in order to understand the phenomenon of psychotic actualization and through which an event in the present gives rise with an almost limitless force to an affective catastrophe (or fiasco) of the past, that may have been hitherto encased, “encysted”.<sup>13</sup> This actualization of a catastrophe sets the ego (*Ich, je*) in a deep crisis; this ever precarious formation is even more precarious in people who have an effective disposition for psychosis. It is a kind of uncontrolled anachronism *in actu*.

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<sup>13</sup> Aulagnier 1983.

The technique of “controlled anachronism” proposed by Nicole Loraux<sup>14</sup> can be approached through the phenomenon Walter Benjamin attempted to describe (or better to illustrate) as “dialectical image”<sup>15</sup>. This image, to take it up again, is thought to represent the historical dialectics (especially in the sense of class-antagonism) but in a kind of immobilized state, which in some aspects is reminiscent of *stasis*. Contemplation of the image, remembering (and remembrance) can possibly lead to reflection. This can be one method or way to remobilize the situation, to create an issue that goes beyond mere intellectualism. Controlled reenacting of *télescopage*, of uncontrolled anachronism in the sense of an invasion of past affects, can be another one, in our specific context it is the relating of the tragic and the psychoanalytical concept of catharsis. The paroxysm in these encounters or *télescopes* can be found at the core of both, the tragic situation and the psychoanalytic one. But beyond this actualization, my hypothesis is that Nicole Loraux saw the practice of psychoanalysis in a more general sense as one form of modern tragic *re/mise-en-scène* of conflicts (on the couch) that is able to bring some elucidation into the universe of historical and literal *mise-en-scène* (in the theater but also in other spheres of the *polis*, in other textual genres). I see this possible *re/mise-en-scène* even more greatly at work in analytical groups where collectively shared affects and collective imaginary are reenacted and symbolized in new ways<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, like psychotic *télescopage*, *stasis* is another form of nearly uncontrolled acting out/reenacting in which past conflicts reemerge with an almost unmediated force suddenly opposing two parts that had formed one and which were supposed to become one by some mythic or real proximity or even identity. In approaching Korkyra and the Commune of Paris (Loraux 1993a), Nicole Loraux works out the standstill of the parts in *stasis*, but also – an this is the crucial point misunderstood by the editing committee that refused the text – the standing still of time: very similar structures and modes of acting out the conflict as if no time had passed; crystallization of time in the conflict and extraction of time between two conflicts, which are so far removed from one another in time. Time is reduced as though through shock, the past is condensed in one explosive moment that immobilizes

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<sup>14</sup> Loraux 1993b.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Psychodrama and group analysis are now part of the theater-curricula of the Vienna University of performing art, the former Max Reinhardt-Seminar. On the other hand Moreno, another Viennese psychotherapist at Freud’s time, invented psychodrama by the inverted analogy. Last but not least, some actors work now together with psychotherapists, psychiatrists and patients in order to perform their problematic, their symptoms or complexes before students. This seemed to be the best solution when the practice to “show” (*vorführen*) people in psychic crisis to a class of students was more and more criticized by teachers and students of the psychotherapeutic and psychiatric curricula.

everything and every body. At their core, neurotic (not psychotic) dreams and tragedies as Freud, or Aristotle, first theorized them, are some kind of controlled or attenuated *remise-en-scène* of such conflicts that otherwise would be reenacted in a more catastrophic, surreal or psychotic way. Controlled anachronism and controlled catharsis are, therefore, intertwined. The analytical setting is, like the theater, the place and time for the reemergence of formerly lived affects. It occurs through a kind of artificial evocation that Aristotle called *mimêsis*. (The artificially produced effects arising from constructing an attraction, as Eisenstein describes for film and which - for Aristotle - would mainly be part of the *opseôs kosmos*, are therefore not the same.)

We can say that theater as a whole, not only the fable, *muthos*, was one of the conditions for the invention of psychoanalysis. Freud put a Sophoclean Drama at the center of his discovery and in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he reencounters another form of it, giving the oedipal scene an almost trans-historical signification. He conceived what he had called the *Urszene*, the primordial scene that he describes in *The Wolf Man*. Psychoanalysis brought to our perception a radical new conception of the soul elucidating new aspects of theater itself. This is especially valid for:

The multilayered structures of the *mise-en-scène*

The deviation or canalization of affects by speech acts and their representational effects (in the polysemic sense of representation)

The role of catharsis in the oscillation between analysis and reconstitution of links (between affect/s, representation/s and desire/s in a given collectivity etc...).

Poetic, creative mimesis enables us to support and contain the conflict. When we continue this rather Aristotelian thought with Freud, it enables us to find new solutions of old and repetitive conflicts that by persisting, become obsessive and sterile, generating machine-like acting out. So we come to another relation between psychoanalysis and historiography (of the *polis* and "her" theater). I mean the passage from acting out (*ausagieren*) to deliberative and transformative action (*handeln*). Taking into consideration this passage should contribute to a better understanding of the support psychoanalysis brings to the historiography of the "feminine" in the Greek world (and beyond it). To be precise, I should speak about the male feminine, because it came to us from a male dominated world and through an almost exclusively male tradition. Male authors of the feminine for male recipients occupy the scene in the theater, the writings and the surrounding or corresponding institutions. Is it a closed circuit? Not completely, because - a few - women are authors and because women are impregnated by this (male) world.

The exclusion of women not only from the *ecclesia*, but from the whole sphere of politics, is a well known fact. To see the theater only as a compensatory reintegration of this

excluded other would be reductive, but I stated it as an implicit hypothesis among others in Nicole Loraux' work; one that seemed worthy of investigation.

What I tried to conceptualize as the screen imaginary of femininity (*imaginaire-écran de la féminité*) is a specific phenomenon organizing the asymmetric gender relations of power and representation. *Écran*, screen, is to be understood in the double sense of, first, projection screen (for the "Other" of the male "One"), and, second, of obstacle (for women trying to penetrate the male spheres of dominance).<sup>17</sup> It is part of what can be called the transcendent imaginary. The strangeness of the femininity in these male constructions has some characteristics of the Parmenidian *Eon*. The screen imaginary of femininity transcends the actually living women, their social lives in a process of change. As part and parcel of the "transcendent imaginary", it corresponds more with the naturalization of asymmetric gender relations that have been analyzed by a number of feminist epistemologists. But one mechanism in the constitution of this layer in the Greek and occidental imaginary is certainly projection or "projective identification" (M. Klein). Freud used the term projection to conceive a defense mechanism in the register of splitting, which Melanie Klein further developed. In this conception, the rejected part of one's self (or the ego) is projected onto another, who is no longer perceived as the other for and as him/- herself, but who appears only in the function of the other as a rejected part of the self/ego. This aggressive rejection/projection is often articulated in the form of reproach (*Vorwurf*, another word for "pro-jection"). The other side of this phenomenon is idealization: the other whom the ego must reproach so greatly becomes dangerous, susceptible of fighting back and must, therefore, be reestablished via idealization (which also misconceives the other as other).

At a social level, splitting and projection are at work in many kinds of conflict, most intensively in wars, *staseis*, ethnic conflicts and catastrophes in which an entire, large group is affected in very invasive ways.

From a perspective of temporality and historiography, the transcendent and even more so the screen imaginary of the other or of femininity (as other of the paradigmatic male), is portrayed as outside of time and change. Feminine bodies add an allegoric body to this abstraction, which becomes, by the way, an allegorically incorporated femininity. In the previously mentioned moments of irruption in history, such as *stasis*, revolution, war or catastrophe, such figures are put onto the stage of the collective imaginary and can function like a psychic container in the above mentioned sense. They can function not only as container of eruptive affects, but also as screen for persecutory affects that are supposed to be acted out onto those who are subjectified by these projections. Group analysis and research about

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<sup>17</sup> Pechriggl 2000.

inter/ethnic conflicts have shown the immense force of such defense mechanisms, once a large group bases their actions on them.

There is no question that each and every one of us is capable of such regression in situations of acute crisis. Regression is not only something sick; on the contrary, as a clinical term it signifies, first of all, a resource in the moment of sudden crisis and psychic catastrophe in which secondary defense mechanisms are not yet powerful enough to guarantee a minimal psychic integrity. The problem is the fixation and the inhibition of reflexive, differentiating forms of representation during the prevalence of the primary splitting. This means a fixation on a primary, splitting form of un/linking affects, un/lust, representation. As long as the fixation lasts it inhibits the work of secondary processes, such as mourning, realistic and ultimately self reflexive elaboration. The fixation of this “state of the soul” implies that on each “occasion” the telescoping irruption is possible. These occasions are re-presentations of analogous affective conflicts that begin to repeat themselves once the facilitation (*Bahnung*) is created. As Vamik Volkan has shown, these kinds of collective repetitions of acting out inscribe and fix themselves into the unconscious of the members of a group but also into the official memory of a lasting group<sup>18</sup>. The catastrophic *télescopage* is at work in the individuals of the group, but contributes to their dis/cohesion. Nevertheless, unlike the “normal” compulsory repetition *télescopage* is a more total and collectively resented affect of annihilation or at least anxious invasion of the egos. The total character of this phenomenon is crucial in order to understand the urge of a total response in form of rejection (splitting and not “repression,” *Verdrängung*).

## ***Epistemological and methodological considerations***

Psychoanalysis has forged concepts that enable us to better elucidate such moments in the past and re-actualize them in the present (or a past closer to us). I am not defending the application of psychoanalysis as it is practiced on people in terms of past events or in literary or philosophical texts, but I think that psychoanalysis and even more group analysis have still a great deal to teach to social sciences. The structure of their conceptual web is the only one existing that in a somehow systematic way renders intelligible the complex communication of intertwined layers containing the psychic, the unconscious and psychosomatic, the socio-cultural and the historical (not only in their psychic dimensions).

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<sup>18</sup> Volkan 2006.

Our entire philosophical, historic and anthropologic creativity is called on to invent and systematize the transfer of concepts into other fields of knowledge (I prefer not to say disciplines). This work of *translatio*, of *metapherein*, has to lean on a new kind of positivism that respects the heterogeneity of being, of sources, of approaches, but also on the speculative work of forging new concepts, new hypothesis, new connections etc. Therefore, the chiasm is important: inventing and transferring within a positivist attitude in Kelsen's sense, that is, in the sense of taking into account fully and realistically what is given and settled, *gesetzt* in German or *posé* in French, and which imposes itself. It does not matter whether we work on literary, philosophical, juridical texts, on images, tropes, words or concepts, we ought to treat them (and their authors) as seriously as possible. Only then are we able to do justice to them and to change them, if possible and wanted. Nicole Loraux constantly reminded us, especially concerning Plato, that words are not where they are by chance. She always assumed that the authors with whom she worked knew what they were doing. Only on this foundation does conceptual speculation make sense, and become capable of being systematic without the help of transcendent and sclerotic *dogmata*.

There will always be some who will denounce as anachronism, the use in classical studies of concepts forged in order to understand modern psychic (and other) phenomena. This objection, however, can be rejected for several reasons, one of which is that Freud himself used a number of Greek elements for his own discoveries and metapsychology. And one of the most interesting and fruitful concepts for historiography that Freud forged is the concept of *nachträglich* (*après-coup*, differed). When Walter Benjamin conceived of the dialectical image in order to better elucidate some moments of the past through specific, "corresponding" windows of perception of the present (or of a past closer to the present), he certainly thought about a phenomenon known as the "Aha experience." It marks the moment of recognition in which "The scales fell from his eyes." It is the moment in which the resistance against a complete change of perspective resolves itself; opening, suddenly and finally, the way to re/cognition.

There are thus several factors that make plausible the use of anachronism, in conjunction with psychoanalytical concepts, in historiography. These concepts are even more valid when they are used in order to elucidate phenomena belonging to the transcendent imaginary, which, as though dissociated from self, transforms socio-historical actuality. In so far as the figurations belonging to this imaginary are projections emerging in situations of crisis and effervescence of affects – in particular, massive anxiety capable of affecting an entire community – under certain conditions the psychoanalytical approach helps us to better understand such processes of figuration and fixation.

Although it may be true that we can no longer feel the way people felt in ancient Greece, it is likewise true that we cannot persist in ignoring that imaginary and philosophical

figurations as well as institutions contain, in different manners, affective conflicts, and how they do so.

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