FREUD: MOMENTS OF MODERNISM

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ABSTRACT

The word "moment" - from the Latin movere (to move) - can be understood in various senses. It is a point of time, an instant; it connotes importance, or weight; in 1666, according to the OED, it could be used to suggest a "definite stage or turning point in a course of events"; in 1691 it came to mean a "cause or motive of action, a determining influence or consideration"...

This dissertation stems from the conviction that the importance and weight of Sigmund Freud's "discovery" and elaboration of psychoanalysis - its impact as a turning point for western modes of intellectual activity, and as a determining consideration for western culture as a whole - has been so profound that it would be impossible to seek from within it the precise measure of its influence. Across modern philosophy, the human sciences, and the arts - from surrealism to pop art, from advertising to social welfare policies - Freud's psychoanalysis permeates the ways in which we live, and is one of the key elements of that experience of modernity we can loosely call "modernism".

The dissertation locates a number of moments of modernism in and around Freud's work - with attention to Freud's relation to the reading and interpretive practices of the twentieth century: Chapter One examines some of the ways in which psychoanalysis and literary studies have met, intersected and, at times, bypassed one another over the past few decades, in a flurry of encounters which have yet to settle into any definitive shape. Chapter Two responds to Stanley Fish's recent attack on Freud's scientific integrity in the "Wolf-man". The chapter focuses, in other words, on one particular strand of the critical tradition defined in the second section of Chapter One.

Chapter Three - which concerns the famous case of "Dora" - attempts, first, to restore some sense of the theoretical moment in Freud's work represented by the case, and second, to re-introduce the question of history into what has become the critics' story of Freud's failure to get to the bottom of Dora's hysteria. The aim of this chapter is to suggest a way beyond the contradiction in which Freud is persistently invoked, in feminist criticism, as both liberator and oppressor, hero and villain.

Chapter Four turns back to the interface between psychoanalysis and literature. Its focal point is a different permutation from that manifested in the "Dora" case history of Freud's life-long quest to solve the "riddle" of femininity. The chapter examines some of the problems Defoe's novel Moll Flanders has posed to a tradition of patriarchal literary criticism. These problems, it argues, are inseparable from questions of representation, female identity and the notion of "femininity" itself - the same questions which proved so intrusive in Freud's narrative of the case of Dora.

This dissertation is concerned not only with the apparent "logic" of the arguments it confronts, but also with the deeper constitution of that logic in and through the complex textures of writing. It aims to demonstrate that one of the most powerful moments of modernism in Freud's work lies in the stimulus it provides to an art of interpretation constantly attentive to the complexity of these textures.

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PREFACE

The word "moment" - from the Latin movere (to move) - can be understood in various senses. It is a point of time, an instant; it connotes importance, or weight; in 1666, according to the OED, it could be used to suggest a "definite stage or turning point in a course of events"; in 1691 it came to mean a "cause or motive of action, a determining influence or consideration"...

This dissertation stems from the conviction that the importance and weight of Sigmund Freud's "discovery" and elaboration of psychoanalysis - its impact as a turning point for western modes of intellectual activity, and as a determining consideration for western culture as a whole - has been so profound that it would be impossible to seek from within it the precise measure of its influence. To some extent, like it or not, we in the West are all Freudians now, and psychoanalysis is one of the key elements of that experience of modernity which we can loosely call "modernism".

"This is the age of Freud and Jung," notes Sanford Schwartz in his recent study of early twentieth century thought (The Matrix of Modernism, 1985) - an age of massive intellectual changes deriving not least from the tendency (which is directly attributable to the influence of Freud's discoveries) to pose a sharp opposition between conscious "surfaces" and unconscious "depths"; between ordinary experience and a hidden realm of mental life; between the world of ordinary awareness and the invisible structures that condition it. Across modern philosophy, the human sciences, and the arts - from surrealism to pop art, from advertising to social welfare policies - Freud's psychoanalysis permeates the ways in which we live.

In the essays which follow, I have tried to locate a number of moments of modernism in and around Freud's work - with particular attention to Freud's relation to the reading and interpretive practices of the twentieth century.

In Chapter One, I examine some of the ways in which psychoanalysis and literary studies have met, intersected and, at times, bypassed one another over the past few decades, in a flurry of encounters which have yet to settle into any definitive shape. My focal point in this chapter resides in what I see as an effort in Freud's writing - whether conscious or unconscious - to transcend the traditional boundaries between the discourses of science and literature; an effort seldom acclaimed by his critics, who have tended either to elide the distinctive place of language in his work, or to use it against him as evidence of his implausibility as a scientist.

The chapter traverses a number of diverse responses, in recent exchanges between psychoanalytic theory, literary theory and the practices of textual analysis, to the ambiguous textual status of Freud's writing - its uneasy position on the borders between literature and science. In Section I, a distinction is drawn between Patrick Mahony's reading of Freud in Freud as a Writer, and those readings of Freud's texts associated with what has popularly come to be known as "French Freud", in particular Derrida's reading of the second chapter of Beyond the Pleasure Principle. While the underlying objective of both these readings might be said to be the constitution of Freud's scientific project as itself an example of figurative writing, the outcome of each is crucially different. Section II is directed at the critical tradition for whom Freud's genius was "poetic" rather than scientific; his ideas more valuable as "metaphors" than as literal truths. In Section III, an

alternative approach is put forward, exemplified in Arnold Davidson's reading of Freud's Three Essays on Sexuality, which presents a version of Freud's "genius" as neither an imaginative nor a rhetorical one so much as a conceptual one. In Section IV, it is suggested that Freud's transcendence of the usual boundaries of science was the enabling dynamic of his thought.

Chapter Two is a response to Stanley Fish's recent attack on Freud's scientific integrity in his reading of Freud's "Wolf-man" case history. The chapter is focused, in other words, on one particular strand of the critical tradition defined in the second section of Chapter One. My response to Stanley Fish was prompted by two striking features of his paper: First, by the confrontation it represents between one specialist trained in the art of literary interpretation, and another who was discovering a methodology for the interpretation of dreams. To what extent do the two interpretative operations really coincide? Second, by a sense of deja-vu as I read his paper, as if everything he was saying had been said before, perhaps only in a different way. What is the fundamental objection underlying most attacks on Freud's work, how is it manifested in Fish's critique and, most significant of all, is it a valid one?

The chapter as a whole was intended not so much to defend Freud against the charge laid against him by Fish - for this would be a different project - as to suggest that even if Fish's charge were a valid one, he failed to make a case for it in his essay; and that this failure was crucially connected with (1) the limitations in his conception of what constitutes interpretive activity, both within the psychoanalytic situation and outside of it, and (2) his failure to engage in any substantial way with the major theoretical concepts of the discourse he claimed to be entering.

In Chapter Three - which concerns another of Freud's most famous case histories, the case of "Dora" - I have tried to do two things: First, to restore some sense of the theoretical moment in Freud's work represented by the Dora case, particularly in its anticipation of later formulations of the crucially significant theory of repression, and in its movement - however halting - towards a new theory of a problematic, differential and component sexuality. Second, I have tried to re-introduce the question of history into what has become the critics' story of Freud's failure to get to the bottom of Dora's hysteria. In doing so, I hope to have suggested a way beyond the contradiction in which Freud is persistently invoked, in feminist criticism particularly, as both liberator and oppressor, hero and villain. As Juliet Mitchell points out (in Psychoanalysis and Feminism, 1974), psychoanalysis, like any other system of thought, was formed and developed within a particular time and place: "but that does not invalidate its claim to universal laws, it only means that these laws have to be extracted from their specific problematic - the particular material conditions of their formation. In this connection we need to know of the historical circumstances of their development mainly in order not to limit them thereto." (xx) Chapter Three, then, re-examines a further moment of the critical reception of Freud's work - the recent outburst of feminist criticism around the "Dora" case history.

In Chapter Four, the final chapter, I turn back to the questions I began with - the interface between psychoanalysis and literature. The focal point of this chapter is a different permutation from that manifested in the "Dora" case history of Freud's life-long quest to solve the "riddle" of femininity. The relation that concerns me here is not that between analyst and analysand, but between the institution of English literary criticism and one of

fiction's most controversial female protagonists: Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders. The chapter examines some of the problems Defoe's novel has posed to a tradition of patriarchal literary criticism. These problems, I argue, are inseparable from questions of representation, female identity and the notion of "femininity" itself - the same questions in fact which proved so intrusive in Freud's narrative of the case of Dora.

In the final section of the chapter, I propose a new perspective through the work of British feminist Denise Riley. In her recent book, Am I that Name?, Riley suggests that the discursive category "women" is neither straightforward nor natural, but is characterized by an "inherent shakiness":

> To put it schematically: 'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; 'women' is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on; 'women' is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation. (Riley, 1988: 1-2)

It is this "shakiness", I argue, exemplified in Defoe's novel in the character of Moll Flanders, which has so successfully resisted the classifications of traditional literary criticism. Although I make few direct references to Freud in the course of this chapter, his work as a whole lies behind it, and has been especially significant in making possible the new perspective I propose to bring,

through Riley, to existing critical debates on Moll Flanders.

This dissertation is concerned not simply with the apparent "logic" of the arguments it confronts, but also with the deeper constitution of that logic in and through the complex textures of writing. It aims to demonstrate that one of the most powerful moments of modernism in Freud's work lies in the stimulus it provides to an art of interpretation constantly attentive to the complexity of these textures.

Despite the links between them, the following analyses were written to stand alone, as separate moments in the movement of Freud's thought and its ongoing history.

CHAPTER ONE

BORDERLINES

> Mediocre spirits demand of science a kind of certainty which it cannot give, a sort of religious satisfaction. Only the real, rare, true scientific minds, can endure doubt, which is attached to all knowledge. I always envy the physicists and mathematicians who can stand on firm ground. I hover, so to speak, in the air. Mental events seem to be immeasurable and probably always will be so.
>
> Sigmund Freud

It is the peculiar focus of literary criticism on questions of language and interpretation which enables its practitioners to direct their attention not only to literary texts but to scientific ones as well. Since both science and literature are constituted in language - both are discursive - both may become objects for the practice of literary criticism. Yet if their common constitution in language is one of the features which unites science and literature, it is also the one (as Roland Barthes long ago recognized) which divides them more surely than any of their differences. The reason for this, as Barthes points out, is that science and literature do not assume or, if one prefers, profess the language which constitutes them in the same way: As far as science is concerned,

> language is simply an instrument, which it profits it to make as transparent and neutral as possible; it is subordinate to the matter of science (workings, hypotheses, results) which, so it is said, exists outside language and precedes it. On the one hand and first there is the content of the scientific message, which is everything, on the other hand and next, the verbal form responsible for expressing that content, which is nothing.

In the case of literature, however - or at any rate, that literature which has "freed itself" from classicism and humanism -

> language can no longer be the convenient instrument or the superfluous backcloth of a social, emotional or poetic "reality" which pre-exists it, and which it is language's subsidiary responsibility to express, by means of submitting itself to a number of stylistic rules. Language is literature's Being, its very world; the whole of literature is contained in the act of writing, and no longer in those of "thinking", "portraying", "telling" or "feeling". (Barthes, 1967: 897)

By professing the language which constitutes them in these two conflicting ways, science and literature stand essentially in opposition one to the other. Of the two, it is science which assumes a privileged position in relation to literature. In assigning itself a purely instrumental status, in which language is simply the transparent medium through which the "truth" of its content is conveyed,

scientific discourse believes itself to be a superior code, suggests Barthes - a mere "instrument of thought", a form of "neutral" language from which a certain number of specialized languages (the literary or poetic languages for example) have derived, as so many "deviants" or "embellishments". This neutral language is then held to be the referential code for all the "ex-centric" languages, which themselves are merely its sub-codes. By identifying itself with this referential code, as the basis of all normality, Barthes goes on to say, scientific discourse arrogates to itself a right grounded essentially in a misconception of the nature of language, which it is the role of literature - or "writing" - precisely to contest.

One writer whose texts have consistently refused to uphold the boundaries between science and literature is Sigmund Freud. Symptomatic of the ambiguous textual status of his writing is the fact that though Freud was essentially a scientist, founder and father of the new science of psychoanalysis, and though, in his writings, he regularly and conscientiously defended the scientific status of his discoveries, the only public recognition he received from Germany in his lifetime was the Goethe Prize for literature. Some years after this award, Albert Einstein is reported to have told Freud that he particularly admired his work not from a scientific but from a literary point of view: "I do not know any contemporary who has presented his subject in the German language in such a masterly fashion," Einstein wrote in a letter to Freud in 1939. Later, in Stuttgart in 1968, a book-length study focused exclusively on Freud's achievement not as a scientist but as a literary artist appeared,[1] and since then, Freud's name has become commonplace in literary studies throughout the West.

Yet Freud's transcendence of the traditional boundaries between the discourses of science and literature has seldom

been positively acclaimed by his critics, who have tended either to elide the distinctive place of language in his work, or to use it against him as evidence of his implausibility as a scientist. In this essay, I wish to examine a number of diverse responses, in recent exchanges between psychoanalytic theory, literary theory and the practices of textual analysis, to the ambiguous textual status of Freud's writing - its uneasy position on the borders between literature and science. To what extent do these exchanges either endorse or undermine the privileged position appropriated for itself by the scientific establishment; its consistent - and in Barthes' view, scandalous - denial of the fact "that language is a vast system, none of whose codes is privileged or, if one prefers, central, and whose various departments are related in a fluctuating hierarchy"? If, as Barthes suggests, what is called for today is a "mutation" in the consciousness, the structure and the objectives of scientific discourse, what part can the debate between literature, psychoanalysis and literary criticism play in bringing this about?

In Section I, a distinction is drawn between Patrick Mahony's reading of Freud in Freud as a Writer, and those readings of Freud's texts associated with what has popularly come to be known as "French Freud", in particular Derrida's reading of the second chapter of Beyond the Pleasure Principle. While the underlying objective of both these readings might be said to be the constitution of Freud's scientific project as itself an example of figurative writing, the outcome of each is crucially different. Section II is directed at the critical tradition for whom Freud's genius was "poetic" rather than scientific; his ideas more valuable as "metaphors" than as literal truths. In Section III, an alternative approach is put forward, exemplified in Arnold Davidson's reading of Freud's Three Essays on Sexuality, which presents a version of Freud's "genius" as

neither an imaginative nor a rhetorical one so much as a conceptual one. In Section IV, it is suggested that Freud's transcendence of the usual boundaries of science was the enabling dynamic of his thought.

I

Patrick Mahony's Freud as a Writer (recently reissued in an expanded edition by Yale University Press) takes Freud's literary achievement as a starting point for an analysis of his "identity as a writer". In his capacity both as practicing psychoanalyst and as professor of English literature at the University of Montreal, Mahony sets out to delimit this "identity" through a proposed "stylistic" exploration of some of his major texts.

Mahony's project, in other words, stands at the intersection between the two fields of psychoanalysis and literature - an intersection to which the editors of Critical Inquiry devoted their winter 1987 issue. In her introduction to this issue, Francoise Meltzer suggests that traditionally, when psychoanalysis and literature are brought together, psychoanalysis is assigned an active interpreting position, while literature plays the role of "slave to psychoanalysis' master", the object to be interpreted; traditionally, "it is psychoanalysis which 'knows' and will tell literature what it is 'really' about. From psychoanalysis literature is supposed to learn what it itself 'means'". (1987: 219) In the usual exchange, suggests Meltzer, literature exists for the purpose of manifesting, almost in spite of itself, a psychoanalytic truth:

> Since fiction is made possible by the constitution of the subject, and since it is the role of psychoanalysis to demonstrate how that constitution occurs, then it follows, psychoanalysis would have it, that fiction becomes truth and thus useful only when decoded by psychoanalysis. Otherwise, it remains merely fable. Literature is then 'recognized' by psychoanalysis only as the producer of Stoff for interpretation and consumption - precisely the position of the slave in the Hegelian model. In this position, literature cannot afford to recognize itself. Even if literature is mystified, as it often is in Freud or Lacan, it is so because it appears to have an arbitrary conception, which psychoanalysis will unravel as the ineluctable and incessant unfolding of the unconscious - nothing accidental, finally, at all. Except that literature does not know this. Its coherence, further, will be destroyed by the psychoanalytic reading; but it is only a surface coherence - the deeper one, the one of which literature itself is ignorant, will be revealed by psychoanalysis. (1987: 218)

Furthermore, not only literature is "partitive" in this way in the perspective of psychoanalysis, maintains Meltzer. The same would apply to all other disciplines: "Linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, history, feminism, 'humanism' could all be said to remain incomplete and ultimately less than meaningful without the overarching vision offered by psychoanalysis". (1987: 219) It is precisely in their implicit opposition to this notion of psychoanalysis' "overarching vision" that the essays in the collection introduced by Meltzer find their common ground - by turning psychoanalysis, in other words, from the interpreter into that which is to be interpreted; by making of it not the "all-consuming master subject" of inquiry, but, for once, its object.

Potentially at least, Mahony's promised "stylistic" project belongs in the same group as the above, for here too it is apparently not the established notions of psychoanalysis that Mahony proposes to bring to the practice of reading, but the texts of psychoanalysis themselves which are to be "put on trial", as it were. But in the end, the project barely fulfills its potential: first, because of the author's failure to ground his exploration of Freud's style in any linguistic tradition which might conceivably lend his version of "stylistics" a less than purely arbitrary status;[2] and second, because of the project's consequent inevitable degeneration, as the work proceeds, from the promised investigation of Freud's writing itself into a series of crude and speculative remarks more concerned with the assignment of psychical motivations to the author than what he had to say.

Evidently, Mahony is of the school which subscribes to the notion that creativity is some sort of disease which (as Meltzer puts it) "once the author is cured, disappears" - the same school which, at a recent seminar for analysts at a psychoanalytic institute in a major American city, came up with a reading of Baudelaire's Fleurs du mal which argued that he wrote it because he struggled with a "negative maternal introject". When it was suggested to the analyst concerned that to see a great work of art purely as a psychoanalytic symptom might be to adopt an impoverished view of the creative act, he responded to his critic (who happened to be a woman) that she too was in need of the cure: "From your reaction to my paper," he is reported to have said, "I am afraid that I must inform you that you too seem to have an unresolved conflict with your mother. Since you are a woman, this conflict has blocked your normal Oedipal development, and thus makes your relation to your father problematic. As I am the paternal figure here - male,

older - I must conclude that you are resisting my interpretation of Baudelaire because you are personally defensive with me and what I represent."[3]

My own resistance in reading Mahony is to the multitude of such symptoms which he manages to uncover, in the course of his study, in Freud's creative output: Can there be any scholarly significance, for instance, in the revelation (a product of Mahony's scratchings through Freud's personal correspondence) that Freud's habit of addressing his lectures to a single member of the audience - very often to his great friend Lou Andreas-Salome, as he tells her in one of his letters - was, in Mahony's view, a manifestation of his "anxiety" about "exteriorizing his ultimately undefinable unconscious", a symptom of Freud's "personal insecurity" which "sought containment in a projected psychic space bounded and defined by good object relations"? (1987: 58). How does it help us to know that Freud's "creativity was at its highest when he was in a bad mood", or that he found a "symbolic paternal value in writing"? Or how are we to respond to the fatuous remark that writing was for Freud above all else a sort of masturbatory impulse - in Mahony's words, "a sublimating satisfaction for his drives", an attempt to "master them", or to give them "external realization".

In his preface to Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text, Geoffrey Hartman remarks that ideally,

> psychoanalysis should provide a closer mode of close reading. Instead, it often blinds the "scientific" interpreter to the use of language, his own as well as that of the text at hand. The reductionist types of reading that result add nothing to theme, symbol, and archetype hunting. What does it matter that the drift

> of an interpretation is descendental rather than ascendental, that sex rather than a lofty ideal proves to be the key? Such concepts as sublimation or regression in the service of the ego or defensive mastery do not compensate for the crudeness and tactlessness of these ventures. That the patient - in this case the text - survives is something of a miracle. (1978: xv)

Mahony's study is an almost parodic embodiment of the kind of "reductionist moves" identified both by Meltzer and Hartman, and which Hartman associates particularly with certain "older" kinds of psychoanalytic interpretations (Freud's excepted) which we read "only to know the worst... to get them over with..." or, as he puts it, "to admire the artist for the odds he overcame, or ourselves for staying relatively sane though born inter faeces et urinas". (1978: xv)

It is crucial, however, that this particular form of psycho-biographical investigation (representative as it is of what Jacques Derrida might have called a form of "empirico-biographical explanation" whose function, ultimately, is to reduce the text to an excuse for the performance of an episode in the life of the author) be distinguished from that form of criticism concerned primarily with the relation between objectivity and subjectivity in discourse, one of whose functions is to foreground the place of the subject in his or her own work; to foreground, in other words, the fact that "every utterance implies its own subject". (Barthes, 1967: 898) Only the latter form of psycho-biographical enterprise, in its capacity to demonstrate the necessity of the subject's constitution within discourse, is in a position to participate in the Barthesian project to "de-throne"

scientific discourse from the privileged position in which it is held by society as a meta-language... Only the latter form is appropriately positioned to demonstrate that, as Barthes writes,

> ...the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity or, if one prefers, the place of the subject in his own work, can no longer be thought of as in the halcyon days of positivist science. Objectivity and rigour, those attributes of the scientist which are still used as a stick to beat us with, are essentially preparatory qualities, necessary at the time of starting out on the work, and as such there is no cause to suspect or abandon them. But they are not qualities that can be transferred to the discourse itself, except by a sort of sleight-of-hand, a purely metonymical procedure which confuses <u>precaution</u> with its end product in discourse. Every utterance implies its own subject, whether this subject be expressed in an apparently direct fashion, by the use of "I", or indirectly, by being referred to as "he", or avoided altogether by means of impersonal constructions. (1967: 898)

What <u>is</u> excluded in the utterance is always only the "person", psychological, emotional, or biographical, certainly not the subject - a point amply demonstrated by many of those readings of Freud's texts associated with what has popularly come to be known as "French Freud".[4] One of the objectives of this recent French initiative is to constitute Freud's scientific project as itself an example of figurative writing, by focusing most insistently on the <u>textuality</u> of his work - an objective exemplified in, for instance, Derrida's reading of the second chapter of <u>Beyond</u>

the Pleasure Principle, in which he analyses Freud's account of the episode of the grandchild's game with the wooden reel, the fort/da episode.

The game is played by Freud's grandchild who, at the age of one and a half, is observed by his grandfather playing with a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. "It never occurred to [the child] to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage," writes Freud. "What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of the his little curtained bed, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his meaningful 'o-o-o-o.' [signifying "gone"] He then pulled the reel out of the bed again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful 'da' [signifying "there"]. This, then, was the complete game - disappearance and return. As a rule one witnessed only its 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." (Freud, 1920g: 15)

Derrida's reading is based on the hypothesis that the process of repetition identified in the fort/da game is "re-enacted" in the account itself in a way which can be shown to "re-inscribe" the writer (Freud) in his own text:

> If we consider the argumentative framework of the chapter, we notice that something repeats itself, and this process of repetition must be identified not only in the content (the examples, the materials described and analyzed) but also in Freud's very writing, in the "steps" taken by his text, in what it does as well as in what it says, in its "acts" as much as in its "objects." What obviously repeats itself in this

> chapter is the movement of the speculator to reject, set aside, make disappear (fort), defer everything that seems to call the PP[5] into question. He notes that it is not enough, that he must postpone the question. Then he summons back the hypothesis of something beyond the pleasure principle only to dismiss it again. The hypothesis returns only like something that has not really returned but has merely passed into the ghost of its presence. (1978: 114/115)

According to Derrida, the description of Ernst's game - of the "earnest game of Ernst, the elder grandson of the grandfather of psychoanalysis" - should no longer be read only as a theoretical argument, "a strictly theoretical speculation that tends to conclude that what we have here is the repetition compulsion or the death drive or simply an inner limit to the PP", but rather that the description of Ernst's game can also be read as an "autobiography" of Freud - "not merely an autobiography entrusting his life to his own more or less testamentary writing but a more or less living description of his own writing, of his way of writing Beyond the Pleasure Principle". (1978: 119)

> [J]ust as Ernst, in recalling the object (mother, plaything, or whatever), comes also to recall himself in an immediately supplementary operation, in the same way the speculating grandfather, describing or recalling this or that, recalls himself, and produces what is called his text, making a contract with himself so as to be left holding all the strings of his line, descendants and ascendants, in an incontestable ascendancy (1978: 134)

By proffering both a multiple subject for the text (Freud as writer, father, grandfather, "father" of a discipline) and a multiple object (the fort/da game; the relation of the pleasure principle to a "beyond"; filiation; dissemination, or the projection of psychoanalysis into the future while at the same time attempting to master that future by repetition) Derrida's reading demonstrates how Freud's text both accounts for and at the same time "acts out" the psychoanalytic processes - such as those of the dream-work - that Freud examined.[6] At the same time, he demonstrates how the subject is constituted within his own discourse. But what survives in the Derridean reading, even as it sets out to "re-inscribe" the writer (Freud) in his text, is a comment not on the man, nor on his life, but on the nature and texture of writing itself, on the fact that the "institutional character of the science of psychoanalysis stands in relation to the institutional character of writing itself" (Hartman 1978: xii), and on the fact of the impossibility, at significant moments, of the writer's achieving any discursive distance from or perspective on what is written:

> This text is auto-biographical, but in a completely different way from what was believed before... Beyond the Pleasure Principle is...not an example of what we believe we already know under the name of auto-biography. It writes the autobiographical, and, from the fact that an "author" recounts something of his life in it, we can no longer conclude that the document is without truth value, without value as science or philosophy. A "domain" opens up in which the "inscription" of a subject in his text is also the necessary condition for the pertinence and performance of a text, for its "worth" beyond what is called empirical subjectivity (if, indeed, there is such a

thing, since subjectivity speaks, writes, and substitutes one object for another). (1978: 135)

Ironically, Mahony's psychobiographical project can only be described as "pre-Freudian" by comparison. In its commitment precisely to delimiting Freud's "identity as a writer", to identifying a single unitary self which would be the source and locus of Freud's entire oeuvre, Mahony implicitly rejects the very Freudian scenario which would have revealed to him the impossibility of his project - a scenario in which the notion of a unitary identity which waits to be revealed to all who take the trouble to uncover it is replaced by that of a subject inevitably partial and divided, consisting not in a single self but instead in a number of "quasi selves" (see Rorty, 1986: 7) which lurk beneath the threshold of consciousness, irrecoverable in toto even to the mind they inhabit.

II

Supplementing Mahony's fond but ultimately unhelpful psycho-biographical investigation of Freud's writing is a gushing tribute to his "literary genius". This places Mahony's reading amongst many recent essays in which Freud has been acclaimed as proto-novelist - in which his texts (in particular the case histories) have been compared to great works of fiction. Representative of this initiative is Steven Marcus' influential reading of one of the most famous of the case histories, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria", better known as the case of Dora.

In his analysis, Marcus compares the narrative course of Freud's history of Dora's illness and treatment to the

general form of the modern experimental novel. Like a modernist writer, he suggests, Freud begins the case history with an elaborate introduction concerning the problematical status of his undertaking and the dubious character of his final achievement. In addition, like the familiar "unreliable narrator" of modernist fiction, Freud pauses at regular intervals to remind the reader that his insight into the complex of events composing the case history has remained "fragmentary", that his understanding of it remains in some essential sense permanently occluded. (1985: 66)
The set of Prefatory Remarks to the history are regarded by Marcus as a kind of "novelistic framing action", in which Freud "rehearses his motives, reasons, and intentions and begins at the same time to work his insidious devices upon the reader":

> First, exactly like a novelist, he remarks that what he is about to let us in on is positively scandalous, for "the complete elucidation of a case of hysteria is bound to involve the revelation of intimacies and the betrayal of... secrets." Second, again like a writer of fiction, he has deliberately chosen persons, places and circumstances that will remain obscure; the scene is laid not in metropolitan Vienna but "in a remote provincial town". He has from the beginning kept the circumstances that Dora was his patient such a close secret that only one other physician - "in whose discretion I have complete confidence" - knows about it. He has "postponed publication" of this essay for "four whole years", also in the cause of discretion... Finally he has buried the case even deeper by publishing it "in a purely scientific and technical periodical" in order to secure yet another "guarantee against unauthorized readers". He has, in short, made his own mystery within a mystery, and one of the

> effects of such obscure preliminary goings-on is to create a kind of Nabokovian frame - what we have here is a history framed by an explanation which is itself slightly out of focus. (1985: 68)

During the course of his essay, Marcus will compare the content of Freud's text to a play by Ibsen (64); its "forbidding" and "disconcerting" quality, in which the writer "succumbs to no impulse to make it easy for the reader" will be said to be reminiscent of both Borges and Nabokov (69/70); and the elaborate "interweaving" of the various strands of time in the account, or, as Marcus puts it, Freud's "geological fusing of various time strata - strata that are themselves at the same time fluid and shifting" will be described as virtually "Proustian" in their complexity (73). Finally, as Marcus reminds us, the actual events of the case (quite apart from Freud's narration of them) are themselves "full of such literary and novelistic devices or conventions as thematic analogies, double plots, reversals, inversions, variations, and betrayals - full of what the 'sharp-sighted' Dora as well as the sharp-sighted Freud thought of as 'hidden connections'..." (79/80)

There is no doubt a certain intellectual satisfaction to be had in seeking out the traces of modernist fiction in Freud's prose. But is this all that there is at stake in the exercise? One of the effects of Marcus' reading is to contribute to the popular perception - so close to the heart of Mahony's project - of Freud as a "literary genius". Yet despite Freud's own well-documented enthusiasm for the novelists' art, it is not certain he would have cared much for Marcus' efforts, nor even the embedded tribute to his literary skill. Indeed, historically, the public's recognition of his success as an artist had, more often than

not, been synonymous with a refusal to acknowledge his validity as a scientist - a bitter reminder to Freud of its scepticism with regard to the existence of any theoretical value in his writing.

Such was the case on the occasion of the publication of the Studies on Hysteria (1895) for which the most substantial recognition came not from the scientific community but from the poet, literary historian, and dramatic critic, Alfred von Bergner, then Professor of the History of Literature in the University and Director of the Imperial Theatre in Vienna: "We dimly conceive the idea that it may one day become possible to approach the innermost secret of human personality..." wrote von Bergner. "The theory itself is in fact nothing but the kind of psychology used by poets." (Jones, 1961: 224) In medical circles however, and in the scientific community as a whole, the book was not well received. (Jones, 1961: 223 ff)

Four years later, The Interpretation of Dreams was given a similar reception. Some eighteen months after publication, no scientific periodical, and only a few others, had so much as mentioned the book. According to Jones, it was simply ignored. Although the book was not entirely neglected by the psychological periodicals, its reviews here were almost as destructive as complete silence would have been: one proclaiming the danger that "uncritical minds would be delighted to join in this play with ideas and would end up in complete mysticism and chaotic arbitrariness"; another settling for the conclusion that "the imaginative thoughts of an artist had triumphed over the scientific investigator". (Jones, 1961: 307)

In the case of Marcus' reading of the Dora narrative, his response pivots on the allegation that the "central moment" of the "central scene" of Dora's life (and Freud's

text)[7] - a scene which Freud orchestrates with "inimitable richness", according to Marcus, and with the "tact" and "sense of form" that one associates with a classical composer of music, or with Proust, Mann, or Joyce... - this central moment, which becomes thereafter the central "reality" of the case, is a "reconstruction" that Freud has "formed in his own mind":

> "This pivotal construction becomes henceforth the principal 'reality' of the case, and we must also observe that this reality remains Freud's more than Dora's, since he was never quite able to convince her of the plausibility of the construction, or, to regard it from the other pole of the dyad, she was never quite able to accept this version of reality, of what 'really' happened." (1985: 79)

Marcus is quick to proclaim the "unquestionable genius" of this "pivotal construction", but it is clearly a "literary" rather than "scientific" genius he has in mind. By suggesting that the "central character" in the action in this history is not Dora but Freud himself, that it is "his story that is being written and not hers that is being retold", Marcus simultaneously repeats the claim, which is also his central thesis, that the history of Dora's case, as constructed in Freud's text, is essentially a fictional one. It must be emphasized, Marcus writes, that the "reality" Freud insists upon is very different from the "reality" that Dora is claiming and clinging to. And he goes on to suggest that not only does Freud overlook for the most part this critical difference, he also adopts no measures for dealing with it: "The demon of interpretation has taken hold of him, and it is this power that presides over the case of Dora." (1985: 85)

In this way, what begins as a tribute to Freud's power as an artist ends as an attack on his integrity as a scientist - an attack in which the "demon of interpretation" is the principal target. What begins, in other words, as a potentially liberating gesture, promising in its inter-disciplinary nature to go beyond the opposition between science and art, ends by surreptitiously reinforcing it. Like other masterpieces of literature or the arts, Marcus claims, Freud's case histories seem to possess certain "transhistorical qualities" - which, if they are by no means easy to specify, are nevertheless clearly discernable. The implacable "march of science", he writes, has not - or has not yet - consigned them to "mere history": "Their singular and mysterious complexity, density and richness have thus far prevented such a transformation and demotion". (1985: 56) In effect, this is to place art and science on either side of an unbridgeable divide - one in which science is ephemeral, subject to the relentless passage of history, while art is "timeless" and lives forever; it is simultaneously to suggest, in effect, that if Freud's case histories are still in circulation, it is to their "transhistorical qualities", that is, to their "complexity, density and richness" as works of <u>art</u> not science that they owe their life.

In a more recent confrontation between literary criticism and another of Freud's best known case histories, Stanley Fish has made a parallel while singularly more direct attack on Freud's scientific integrity. (Fish: 1987) The target this time is the so-called "Wolf-Man" case history (1918[1914]), and the force of Fish's attack is invested primarily in the by now familiar allegation that the greater part of the final interpretation of the dream which is the centre-piece of the Wolf-Man's analysis, is the product of "persuasion and force" on the part of Freud, the

analyst, rather than the result of independent work on the part of the patient. Even where the patient does apparently speak for himself in the interpretation of the dream, claims Fish, the independence of his words is compromised by the method by which they have been "induced" by Freud.

In Fish's analysis, Freud's account of the Wolf-Man's case history proceeds not according to principles of rationality and objectivity, but is characterized by a rhetorical pattern in which repeated claims of "independence" - for the analysis itself, for the "materials" upon which it is built, and for the patient's share in its work - can be shown to be powerfully subverted by the narrative in which they are submerged: "The real story of the case," writes Fish, "is the story of persuasion, and we will be able to read it only when we tear our eyes away from the supposedly deeper story of the boy who had a dream". (1987: 163)

Fish's argument against the "independence" of the Wolf-Man's analysis, which he constructs in this way in the first section of his paper, and elaborates in those which follow, along with Marcus' claim that in the Dora case history, "it is [Freud's] story that is being written and not [Dora's] that is being retold", are situated at the edge of a much broader (and continuing) tradition of criticism which attacks Freudian psychoanalysis on the grounds that it "acts by suggestion" - or, in Fish's terms, "that what the analyst claims to uncover (in the archaeological sense of which Freud was so fond) he actually creates by verbal and rhetorical means". (1987: 158). Within this tradition, the principle objection to psychoanalysis follows Wittgenstein's observation that Freud is constantly claiming to be scientific, but what he gives is <u>speculation</u> - "something prior even to the formation of a hypothesis."[8] In Wittgenstein's view, the only reason these "speculations"

have gained a certain popularity in the mind of the public is through their "appeal", or their "charm" as explanations: "The picture of people having unconscious thoughts has a charm. The idea of an underworld, a secret cellar. Something hidden, uncanny... A lot of things one is ready to believe because they are uncanny." (Cited in Cioffi, 1969: 186)[9]

The same fundamental objection is embedded in Sebastiano Timpanaro's reference in The Freudian Slip (1976) to the "captious and sophistical method, resistant to any verification, quick to force interpretations to secure pre-ordained proofs, employed by Freud and Freudians in their explanation of slips, dreams and neurotic symptoms." (1976: 14) Timpanaro's aim in this study, which concentrates on The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, is to "demystify a mode of reasoning which is also to be found in other of Freud's works - in particular, The Interpretation of Dreams and in general, all those writings which are dominated by the work of 'interpretation', which belongs to the anti-scientific aspect of psychoanalysis". (1976: 12) Timpanaro uses the word "anti-scientific" because he regards it as the most appropriate to designate the "ensemble of diverse objections" which can be made against psychoanalysis - objections which, as he points out, are interrelated, even if not identical. It is apparent that in both Fish's and Timpanaro's view, a method of investigation which admits the practice of interpretation cannot by nature be scientific.[10]

Traditionally, and prior to the work of the French women's liberation group Psychoanalyse et Politique, feminists have rooted their objections in similar ground. Historically, for many feminists, Freud has been, and indeed still is a prime target as a "male chauvinist" whose so-called "scientific" propaganda has been responsible for damning a generation of emancipated women to the passivity

of the second sex. (cited in Mitchell, 1974: 303) In her survey of traditional feminist attacks on the Freudian notion of femininity (in Psychoanalysis and Feminism, 1974), Juliet Mitchell elicits the common claim on which their diverse arguments rest - namely, that Freud's theories are not based on what may justifiably be called scientific evidence.[11] Particularly pertinent here is the work of Sulamith Firestone who, taking her cue from Havelock Ellis' remark, in 1917, that Freud was a great artist but not a scientist, finds "poetic" rather than "scientific" genius in Freud's work:

> But was there any value in [Freud's] ideas? Let us re-examine some of them once again, this time from a radical feminist view. I believe Freud was talking about something real, though perhaps his ideas, taken literally, lead to absurdity. In this regard, consider that Freud's genius was poetic rather than scientific; his ideas more valuable as metaphors than as literal truths. (cited in Mitchell, 1974: 346)

In the same way, Marcus attributes the fascination of the Dora history (as well as its ultimate failure) to Freud's genius as a story-teller, while for Fish, the "appeal" of Freudian propositions in general (and in the Wolf-Man's case history specifically) is directly attributable to the peculiar "discursive power" of which and by which they have been constructed. The true content of Freudian explanations, according to Fish, is the story of their making, the story of "persuasion... practised on a massive scale", in which the reader only believes what he is told because he has "fallen totally under the control of the teller."[12]

Underlying all these readings is the implicit requirement that, even if literature knows that language is never naive, never "transparent" - that is, that it can never convey any "truth" which is extraneous to writing, which is not a truth having to do with the art of writing itself - the language of science, on the other hand, must remain "innocent": a neutral utensil, an instrument merely, to convey a "meaning" or a "truth" or a "fact" which is beyond it, foreign to it. All these readings, in other words, end by endorsing the privileged position assumed by scientific discourse as the referential code for all the "ex-centric" languages, which themselves are merely its sub-codes.

III

It has been said that in the history of psychoanalysis, two competing myths about Freud have gradually developed. In a recently published reading of Freud's Three Essays on Sexuality, framed as a challenge to both, Arnold Davidson characterizes these myths as follows:

> The first myth, that of official psychoanalysis, depicts Freud as a lonely genius, isolated and ostracized by his colleagues, fashioning psychoanalysis single-handedly and in perpetual struggle with the world at large. The history of psychoanalysis under the sway of this myth has become the story of Freud as triumphant revolutionary. The second, opposing myth pictures Freud as getting all of his ideas from someone else - usually Wilhelm Fliess, although the names of Jean Martin Charcot, Havelock Ellis, and Albert Moll,

> among many others, are also mentioned frequently - and taking credit for what were in fact no more than minor modifications in previously developed theories. This is the myth of the career discontents, and the history of psychoanalysis dominated by it has become the story of Freud as demagogue, usurper, and megalomaniac. (1987: 256)

To these two myths we might now add a third, in which Freud emerges most strongly as a literary genius, whose imaginative and rhetorical powers occasionally enabled him to seduce his audience into mistakenly identifying his theoretical double-talk with scientific fact. This is the Wittgenstinian story of psychoanalysis as essentially duplicitous and dangerous, likely to do more harm than good: "Because although one may discover in the course of it various things about oneself, one must have a very strong and keen and persistent criticism in order to recognize and see through the mythology that is offered or imposed on one. There is an inducement to say, 'Yes, of course, it must be like that'..." (1972: 52) Under the sway of this myth, the history of psychoanalysis is itself the history of a "powerful mythology", the story of Freud as at worst hypocrite and dissembler, at best master illusionist.

While the perpetrators of this myth should be given credit for their recognition of, and focus upon, what many of Freud's critics ignore, that is, the place of language in his work, it is their apparent underlying allegiance to the notion of science as a form of neutral language, an instrument of thought - which, if it has a certain need of language, is nevertheless not, like literature, <u>in</u> language - that leads them inevitably to the conclusion that the so-called literary qualities of Freud's writing must necessarily disqualify it as science. Consequently, and

paradoxically, the very focus of these commentaries on the textuality of Freud's writing, far from encouraging the "mutation" in the consciousness of scientific discourse called for by Barthes, ends rather by confirming its present notion of itself as a superior referential code in relation to which all others are mere embellishments. How could this be avoided? What would it mean to read Freud so as neither to elide the place of language in his work nor to acknowledge it only as a threat to its credibility as science?

It is in the response it offers to this question that Davidson's reading of the Three Essays seems to me to be particularly significant. In it, Davidson suggests that despite the enormous number of pages that has been written on these essays, it is very easy to underestimate their density - "a density at once historical, rhetorical and conceptual". (1987: 252) This underestimation stems, Davidson suggests, from historiographical assumptions that quickly misdirect us away from the fundamental issues at stake in Freud's work. What distinguishes his own reading is his attachment, as he puts it, to a different epistemological and methodological orientation from that at work in previous material - "a different and particular way of doing the history of psychoanalysis". Central to this new epistemological and methodological orientation is the archaeological perspective of Michel Foucault. Indeed, Davidson classifies his reading of Freud's Three Essays as following in the wake of some of his own earlier writings, in which he has tried to "adopt and adapt Foucault's archaeological perspective, using it to write a history of nineteenth-century psychiatric theories of sexuality". (1987: 254/255)

Davidson's debt to Foucault is particularly apparent in his utilisation of Foucault's notion of the "discursive

practice" - a central constituent of which, in Davidson's interpretation, is "a set of concepts linked together by specifiable rules that determine what statements can and cannot be made with the concepts". To write a history of nineteenth-century psychiatry by way of this notion, according to Davidson, requires writing a history of the emergence of a new system of concepts and showing how these concepts are internally related by a set of rules to form what we might think of as a "determinate conceptual space". (1987: 255) How we characterise Freud's place in this history, Davidson goes on to say, will then depend not on who said what first, but on whether the structure of concepts associated with Freud's writings continues, extends, diverges from, or undermines the conceptual space of nineteenth-century psychiatry.

> What we need... is a history of the concepts used in psychoanalysis, an account of their historical origins and transformations, their rules of combination, and their employment in a mode of reasoning. This task presumes, first, that we can isolate the distinctive concepts of nineteenth-century psychiatry, articulate their rules of combination, and thereby discern their limits of the possible. We must then undertake the very same enterprise for Freud's work, which, with sufficient detail, should enable us to see more clearly whether Freud's conceptual space continues or breaks with that of his predecessors. (1987: 257)

It is this focus on the <u>conceptual</u> and <u>historical</u> dimensions of language - the conceptual as contingent on the historical - which distinguishes Davidson's reading of Freud from the tradition of textual analysis exemplified in the earlier mentioned essays by Marcus and Fish. What emerges in

Davidson's reading is a version of Freud's "genius" as neither an imaginative nor a rhetorical one so much as a conceptual one, grounded not so much in his manipulatory powers when dealing with the language of nineteenth-century psychiatry as in his ability, at the level of conceptual articulation above all, fundamentally to alter it: "Many writers before Freud possessed bits and pieces of his terminology and exhibited an inchoate, unself-possessed grappling with the problems brought to light by the Three Essays," writes Davidson. "But it was Freud who ascended to the level of concepts, who systematically and lucidly thought what had previously remained in a kind of precognitive blockage..." (1987: 275) The true source of Freud's genius, in other words, lay not so much in his ability to work with language as in his power to proceed in spite of it.

The particular concept on which Davidson focuses his attention in this essay is that of "sexual perversion". His analysis thus concentrates primarily on the first of Freud's Three Essays, "Sexual Aberrations". He begins with the observation that in order even to approximate to a comprehensive reading of this essay, it will be necessary to begin before Freud, with the prevailing concept of sexual aberration (or perversion) in the literature of nineteenth-century psychiatry; it will be necessary to "demarcate the conceptual space of which perversion was an element that dominated European psychiatry at the time Freud was writing the Three Essays". And he goes on to point out that the best way to begin to understand the nineteenth-century conceptual space encircling perversion will be to examine the notion of the "sexual instinct": "for the conception of perversion underlying clinical thought was that of a functional disease of this instinct. That is to say, the class of diseases that affected the sexual instinct was precisely the sexual perversions". (1987: 258)

To be able to determine what phenomena are functional disturbances or diseases of the sexual instinct, Davidson proceeds, one must also specify in what the normal, or natural, function of this instinct consists: "Without knowing the normal function of the instinct, everything and nothing could count as a functional disturbance". (1987: 260) Indeed, by the time Freud inherits the concept of the sexual instinct, as Davidson goes on to demonstrate, there is virtually unargued unanimity not only on the fact that this instinct does have a natural function, but also on what that function is. The view of Krafft-Ebing (in his Textbook of Insanity) is offered as representative:

> During the time of the maturation of physiological processes in the reproductive glands, desires arise in the consciousness of the individual, which have for their purpose the perpetuation of the species (sexual instinct)...
>
> With opportunity for the natural satisfaction of the sexual instinct, every expression of it that does not correspond with the purpose of nature - i.e., propagation - must be regarded as perverse. (1987: 260)

The natural function of the sexual instinct then, is propagation, and the corresponding natural, psychological satisfaction of this instinct must then consist in the satisfaction derived from heterosexual, genital intercourse. Sadism, masochism, fetishism, and homosexuality must all then be classified together as perversions since, as Davidson points out, "all exhibit the same kind of perverse expression of the sexual instinct, the same basic kind of

functional deviation, which manifests itself in the fact that psychological satisfaction is obtained primarily through activities disconnected from the natural function of the instinct". (1987: 262)

This then is the prevailing conception of the sexual instinct and its perversions which Freud inherits and with which he is obliged to work in his Three Essays. To this popular conception of the sexual instinct Freud introduces two new technical terms: The sexual object is "the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds," while the sexual aim is "the act towards which the instinct tends" (1987: 263) As far as the "perversions" are concerned, these may now be classified in terms of (1) deviations with respect to the sexual object which, in relation to the prevalent conception of the natural function of the sexual instinct, must necessarily consist in deviations from the natural attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; and (2) deviations with respect to sexual aim, which must now necessarily consist in deviations from the natural goal of sexual union. These, as Davidson points out, are precisely the two conceptually basic kinds of deviations we should expect of those writers who subscribed to the popular conception of the sexual instinct. (1987: 263)

It is important to recognize at this point that at the time Freud inherits it, shared opinion regarding this definition of the concept of the sexual instinct is unquestioned: in the nineteenth-century psychiatric theories that preceded Freud, both a specific object and a specific aim formed part and parcel of the instinct itself. The very nature of the sexual instinct manifested itself, according to these theories, in an attraction to members of the opposite sex and in a desire for genital intercourse with them.

In his discussion of those "perversions" which manifest themselves as deviations in respect of the sexual object, Freud gives his fullest attention to inversion (homosexuality) - the deviation to which most nineteenth-century psychiatrists had themselves devoted the most attention. And it is in the following passage, with which Freud concludes his discussion on deviations in respect of the sexual object, that, as Davidson will demonstrate, he deals his first "conceptually devastating blow to the entire structure of nineteenth-century theories of sexual psychopathology". (1987: 265) The passage is worth quoting in full:

> It has been brought to our notice that we have been in the habit of regarding the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object as more intimate than it in fact is. Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together - a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thought between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object's attractions. (Freud, 1905d: 147-48)

In order to show that inversion was a real functional deviation and not merely a statistical abnormality without genuine pathological significance, Davidson reasons, one had to conceive of the "normal" object of the instinct as part of the very content of the instinct itself: "If the object is not internal to the instinct, then there can be no intrinsic clinico-pathological meaning to the fact that the

instinct can become attached to an inverted object." (1987: 265) It is through claiming, in effect, in the above passage, that there is no natural object of the sexual instinct, that the sexual object and the sexual instinct are merely "soldered together", that Freud proves himself worthy of the name of genius, in Davidson's eyes. Freud's conclusion, he writes,

> is explicitly and directly opposed to any conclusion that could be drawn by using the [prevailing] concept of the sexual instinct. The relationship between the concepts of sexual instinct and sexual object found in nineteenth-century texts, a rule of combination partially constitutive of the concept of the sexual instinct, was completely undermined by Freud, and as a consequence of this cutting away of old foundations, inversion could not be thought of as an unnatural functional deviation of the sexual instinct. (1987: 265-266)

In much the same way, as Davidson demonstrates, Freud's argument, his "structure of concepts", leads to the parallel conclusion that the "normal" aim of the sexual instinct, genital intercourse, is not part of the content of the instinct; or, in other words, in the terms of Freud's earlier conclusions about the sexual object, the sexual instinct and sexual aim are merely "soldered together". If the resulting overall structure of Freud's argument is to show that neither a specific aim nor a specific object has any constitutive bond with the sexual instinct, and if the previously shared concept of the sexual instinct is thus effectively dismantled, then, remarks Davidson, it is difficult to see how any conceptual foothold could remain for the concept of unnatural functional deviations of this instinct:

> In the case of both sexual aim and sexual object, it is only the apparent uniformity of normal behaviour that directs us to think otherwise. But this apparently well-entrenched uniformity actually masks the operations of the sexual instinct, operations which, when conceptualized by Freud, show us that the idea of the natural function of the instinct has no basis whatsoever. We ought to conclude from what Freud says here that there are no true perversions. The conceptual space within which the concept of perversion functions and has a stable role has been thoroughly displaced - and displaced in a way that requires a new set of concepts for understanding sexuality and a new mode of reasoning about it. (1987: 270-71)

Crucial to the difference between Davidson's reading and the tradition of literary analysis exemplified by Marcus and Fish et al, and in Mahony's project as a whole, is Davidson's recognition, not only of the rhetorical, but especially of the historical and conceptual density of Freud's texts. By concentrating almost exclusively on the "literary" aspect of Freud's work, which is defined in this case primarily as a function of its rhetorical power, these critics are led to underestimate or ignore both its historical and conceptual dimensions. In Davidson's reading of the Three Essays, Freud's name itself - along with those of his predecessors, such as Bloch, Moll and others - are treated as, so to speak, "placeholders for certain sets of concepts and the way these concepts fit together to constitute a conceptual space". Only from this perspective can Davidson be appropriately placed to determine the way in which these essays provided the resources to "overturn" the conceptual space which made it possible for psychiatrists to make the statements about perversion that so dominated the

period - by fundamentally altering the rules of combination for concepts such as sexual instinct, sexual object, and sexual aim, with the consequence that these shared concepts, among others, were destroyed.

That Freud himself was not always able to grasp the import of his own work; that he continued to use the idea of perversion as if his own conceptual innovations were not wholly accessible to him; that he often reintroduced, "behind his own back", in the Three Essays and elsewhere, identifications that he had shown to be untenable; that, in Davidson's terms, his "genius" was not always conscious of itself as such, is explained in Davidson's text by what he calls the "divergent temporality of the emergence of new concepts and the formation of new mentalities". (1987: 276) "Automatisms of attitude," writes Davidson, "have a durability, a slow temporality, which does not match the sometimes rapid change of conceptual mutation. Mental habits have a tendency towards inertia, and these habits resist change that, in retrospect seems conceptually required." (1987: 276) When this is taken into account, the hesitations and ambiguities of Freud's texts can no longer be seen as the result of some "deconstructive indeterminacy or undecidability of the text", but are rather, as Davidson remarks, the "consequence of the dynamics of fundamental change":

> Mentality and concept are two different aspects of systems of thought, and we should not expect them to be coherently connected all at once, as if forms of experience could be dissolved and reconstituted overnight. Sidney Morgenbesser is said to have asked the following question on an exam at Columbia University: 'Some people argue that Freud and Marx went too far. How far would you go?' Whether Freud went too

> far or not far enough, this is exactly the right range of question. How far can you go? How far will you go? (1987: 277)

IV

Freud's critics have often suggested that his work would have been more successful had it embodied their notions of scientific discourse; but there is evidence to suggest that the enabling dynamic of Freud's thought was the result of a constant transgression of the boundaries of these notions as instituted by the scientific community during his lifetime. For all his desire that psychoanalysis be accorded the resonance and prestige of a true science along with all the others - "Psychoanalysis is a method of research, an impartial instrument, like the infinitesimal calculus..." (Freud, 1930: 36) - Freud never failed to respond to his material with the full resources of a supremely creative imagination. Indeed, there are many examples of this creative tension scattered throughout his work. In the earliest case histories of the Studies on Hysteria (1893-1895) he writes,

> I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuro-pathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science...(1895d: 160)

The problem, Freud believed - and in this he consoled himself - lay not in any preference of his own for the literary or fictional mode of writing so much as in the nature of his subject itself:

> The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection. (1895d: 160-161)

In the Dora case history, which appeared in 1905, Freud was prepared to acknowledge that his narrative was such that many would find it possible, and would take it upon themselves, to read it as a roman a clef, "designed for their private delectation", rather than a serious contribution to the psycho-pathology of the neuroses. (1905e: 9) Indeed, as Steven Marcus has shown, Freud's prophecy was not to go unfulfilled. In his reading of the memoirs of Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber, published in 1911, Freud made a further confession of his convictions regarding the thin line dividing fact from fiction, truth from delusion: "It remains for the future to decide whether there is more delusion in my theory than I should like to admit, or whether there is more truth in Schreber's delusion than other people are as yet prepared to believe," he wrote. (1911c: 79) In a letter to Hermann Struck in 1914, Freud acknowledged his essay on da Vinci to be "partly fiction" (Freud, E., 1961: 312) and in the essay itself, he admitted that as a piece of writing it might easily be classified as a "psycho-analytic novel":

> In the preceding chapters I have shown what justification can be found for giving this picture of Leonardo's course of development - for proposing these subdivisions of his life and for explaining his vacillation between art and science in this way. If in making these statements I have provoked the criticism, even from friends of psycho-analysis and from those who are expert in it, that I have merely written a psycho-analytic novel, I shall reply that I am far from over-estimating the certainty of these results. Like others I have succumbed to the attraction of this great and mysterious man, in whose nature one seems to detect powerful instinctual passions which can nevertheless only express themselves in so remarkably subdued a manner. (1910c: 134)

It is only fitting that the scientific investigator who chose for his objects of research the stuff of dreams, desires and fantasies - those very fictions by which we constitute ourselves as human subjects - should have been one of the first to refuse, however tentatively, the margins between literature and the more important territory of "truth" traditionally set aside as the domain of science. It was Barthes who said that "what the human sciences are discovering today, in whatever field it may be, sociological, psychological, psychiatric, linguistic, &c., literature has always known..."; but it might just as well have been Freud. Pace his critics, Freud himself was well aware of the ambiguous textual status of much of his own writing, which hovered uneasily, he seemed to feel, on the borders between literature and science. Yet was it not precisely this uneasy position which enabled him to open up that "other place", that whole new dimension of intellectual

inquiry, the unconscious? "Only the real, rare, true scientific minds can endure doubt, which is attached to all knowledge," he once said to Marie Bonaparte. (cited Mahony, 1987: 77) Freud's commitment finally was a commitment to scepticism - a scepticism which, in refusing the usual boundaries of science, made it possible to transcend them and explore a new continent of knowledge.

NOTES

1. This was Walter Schonau's doctoral thesis, Sigmund Freuds Prosa: Literarische Elemente seines Stils, published by JB Metzlersche Verlag (cited in Mahony, 1987: 10)

2. For reference to a number of schools of thought in modern linguistics that have yielded significant results for the study of literary texts, see J.M. Coetzee: "Linguistics and Literature", in Ryan, R. and Van Zyl, S. (eds.) An Introduction to Contemporary Literary Theory (Johannesburg: AD Donker, 1982) In this essay, Coetzee concentrates on two schools: that of generative-transformational grammar associated with the name of Noam Chomsky, and that of structuralism, particularly the kind of structuralism defined in the writings of Roman Jakobson.

3. For the full account, see Meltzer, 1987.

4. Exemplary of one application of the recent French initiative which I shall not discuss here, and in which Lacan is the seminal figure, are the essays introduced by Jeffrey Mehlman in French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis (Yale French Studies, 48) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) In his editorial introductory essay, Mehlman notes that "to the extent that the truth of Freud's theory is the fact of repression, the very resistance to that truth, the structure of its escape, constitutes an essential dimension of the discovery itself. So that psychoanalytic theory after Freud, in this view, should not be (primarily) a 'rectification' of Freud's theory on the basis of new data. Nor should it be an effort to purge Freud's writings of the elements (eg. the 'death instinct') with no apparent empirical basis. Analytic

theory, on the contrary, should be above all the theory of the contradictions in Freud's texts, of what we have referred to (all too succinctly) as the repression of the discovery of repression." (6)

5. "PP" is the initial for the French expression for "pleasure principle" - a concept developed early in Beyond the Pleasure Principle and in Derrida's text. At the same time, the French pronunciation of these initials sounds like the equivalent of "granddaddy" (pepe). This homonymy links the authority of the pleasure principle and that of the grandfather or grandfathers evoked in the text.

6. For a lucid summary of this aspect of Derrida's reading - of the way in which he not only "overdetermines the 'scene of writing'" but actually "inserts the writer into it", see Geoffrey Hartman, 1978: xiii.

7. Marcus is here referring to the scene between Dora and Herr K. that took place when she was fourteen years old, and acted, Freud said, as a "sexual trauma". The scene is represented by Marcus as follows: "The reader will recall that on this occasion Herr K. contrived to get Dora alone 'at his place of business' in the town of B-------, and then without warning or preparation 'suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips.' Freud then asserts that 'this was surely just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never before been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door'." (All italics are Marcus')

8. Cyril Barrett (ed.) Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations (University of California Press, 1972) p. 44. For further references to the "huge literature focusing on the issue of evidence and testability" see Fish's list in The Linguistics of Writing - Arguments between Language and Literature footnote 5, pp. 171-172.

9. In the course of his essay, Cioffi will reveal repeatedly his own scepticism towards Freudian propositions - by likening the notion of the unconscious to the "invisible companion phantasies" of our childhood (188); by proffering physiological explanations to replace Freud's psychological ones (189); by attributing Freud's attempts to illustrate the operation of unconscious agencies (in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life and elsewhere) to an unacknowledged and underhand "determination to describe familiar facts in a novel and congenial idiom". (191) Where Freud is most convincing, Cioffi will evoke not the probability of his assertions but his "grammatical genius", his "ingenuity in devising unconstruable idioms" (194), or his "ingenious exploitation... of confusion... in the interests of the theory". (195) He will suggest, alongside Wittgenstein, that psychoanalytic explanations in general are akin to aesthetic ones: "...aren't these [explanations] once again simply a matter of "giving a good simile", of 'placing things side by side'?" Via the work of GE Moore (Mind, 1955), Cioffi will infer that "the world, conceived of psychoanalytically, is just the everyday world taken over again with an altered expression". (209) In the end, he will conclude that "there are good grounds for assimilating [Freud's] achievement to that of the anonymous geniuses to whome it first occurred that Tuesday is lean and Wednesday fat, the low notes of the piano dark and the high notes light. Except that instead of words, notes and shades, we have scenes from human life". (210)

10. Amongst those "diverse objections" put forward by Timpanaro are the Marxist claims that psychoanalysis is a "bourgeois doctrine" incapable of seeing beyond an ideological horizon delimited precisely by the class interests of the bourgeoisie; and that it is "anti-materialistic" in that it eternalizes situations which are historically specific - for example, suggests Timpanaro, "it abstracts what truth there is in the notion of 'hatred of the father' from an authoritarian structure of the family, which remains transient even if it is slow to pass away, and transforms it into a sort of eternal destiny of mankind". (13).

11. While providing a comprehensive survey of, and response to this tradition, the work of Mitchell's text is to defend psychoanalysis against it, and to show that because those feminists in opposition to Freud try to discuss his concept of femininity outside the framework of psychoanalysis, their objections, and even their tributes, cannot be made to stand up. She also reveals that their rejection of the scientific status of psychoanalysis would be more accurately described as a rejection of its two most crucial discoveries: the unconscious, and infantile sexuality. Amongst those feminist writers discussed by Mitchell are Simone de Beauvoir (The Second Sex, 1949), Betty Friedan (The Feminine Mystique, 1963), Eva Figes (Patriarchal Attitudes, 1970) and Germaine Greer (The Female Eunuch, 1971).

12. For a development of, and response to Fish's arguments, see my "Power, Meaning and Persuasion in Freud's 'The Wolf-Man': A Response to Stanley Fish", in the minnesota review, forthcoming 1990.

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CHAPTER TWO

POWER, MEANING AND PERSUASION IN FREUD'S "THE WOLF-MAN": A RESPONSE TO STANLEY FISH

In July 1986, at the "Linguistics of Writing" colloquium held at the University of Strathclyde, Stanley Fish gave a paper in which questions of "power", "meaning" and "persuasion" were discussed in relation to a critical analysis of Freud's well-known "Wolf-Man" case history. An abbreviated version of the same paper appeared in the Times Literary Supplement of August 29,[1] prefaced by the following introductory remarks:

> I have two epigraphs for this essay. The first is from James Strachey's preface to his translation of Freud's Introductory Lectures. Freud, he says, was "never rhetorical", and was entirely opposed to laying down his view in an authoritarian fashion. The second is a report by the Wolf-Man of what he thought to himself shortly after he met Freud for the first time: this man is a Jewish swindler, he wants to use me from behind, and shit on my head. This paper is dedicated to the proposition that the Wolf-Man got it right. (1986: 935)

My response to Stanley Fish was prompted by two striking features of his paper: First, by the confrontation it represents between one specialist trained in the art of literary interpretation, and another who was discovering a

methodology for the interpretation of dreams. To what extent do the two interpretative operations really coincide? Second, by a sense of deja-vu as I read his paper, as if everything he was saying had been said before, perhaps only in a different way. What is the fundamental objection underlying most attacks on Freud's work, how is it manifested in Fish's critique and, most significant of all, is it a valid one?

This essay, then, is directed not only at Fish's paper, but at the critical tradition it both reflects and perpetuates.

I

Fish's "proposition" is based on the argument that Freud has used and manipulated the facts of the Wolf-Man's case to suit his own hypotheses, and, more specifically, to defend and justify the theoretical premisses upon which the discipline of psychoanalysis is built. In Fish's analysis, Freud's account of the Wolf-Man's case history proceeds not according to principles of rationality and objectivity, but is characterized by a rhetorical pattern in which repeated claims of "independence" - for the analysis itself, for the "materials" upon which it is built, and for the patient's share in its work - can be shown to be powerfully subverted by the narrative in which they are submerged: "The real story of the case," writes Fish, "is the story of persuasion, and we will be able to read it only when we tear our eyes away from the supposedly deeper story of the boy who had a dream." (1986: 937)

In the course of his critique, Fish will suggest that the greater part of the final interpretation of the dream which is the centre-piece of the analysis, is the product of "persuasion and force" on the part of Freud, the analyst, rather than the result of independent work on the part of the patient. Even where the patient does apparently speak for himself in the interpretation of the dream, the independence of his words is compromised, according to Fish, by the method by which they have been "induced" by Freud. Fish is here referring in particular to the way in which Freud attempts to overcome the patient's persistently apathetic attitude to the analysis by fixing a particular date on which the treatment would have to end, "no matter how far it had advanced."

In so doing, suggests Fish, "the coercion [on Freud's part] could not be more obvious..." By imposing a fixed limit on the duration of the analysis, Freud was effectively assuring its advancement, and, what is more, assuring it "in a form he [would] approve." As further grist to his mill, Fish goes on to point out that "Freud does not shrink from naming [this imposition] as an exercise of 'inexorable pressure'; yet in the very same sentence he contrives to detach the pressure from the result it produces: 'Under the inexorable pressure of the fixed limit the patient's resistance gave way, and now in a disproportionately short time, the analysis produced all the material which made it possible to clear up his inhibitions and remove his symptoms.'" (1986: 935) In Fish's interpretation, the analysis is here cunningly, and indeed falsely, presented "as if it were independent of the constraints that father it, and at the end of the sentence the clearing up of inhibitions and the removal of symptoms appear as effects without a cause, natural phenomena that simply emerge in the course of their own time..." (1986: 935)

It is in this "remarkable sequence... repeated in a variety of ways in the paragraphs that follow" that Fish detects the "pattern" which he feels to be constitutive of the narrative structure of the case history as a whole: "Always the pattern is the same:" writes Fish, "the claim of independence - for the analysis, for the patient's share, for the 'materials' - is made in the context of an account that powerfully subverts it, and then it is made again." (1986: 935)

The argument against the "independence" of the analysis, which Fish constructs in this way in the first section of his paper, and elaborates in those which follow, is buttressed by a critical tradition which attacks Freudian psychoanalysis on the grounds that it "acts by suggestion" - or, in Fish's terms, "that what the analyst claims to uncover (in the archaeological sense of which Freud was so fond) he actually creates by verbal and rhetorical means" (1986: 935). Within this tradition, the principle objection to psychoanalysis follows Wittgenstein's observation that "Freud is constantly claiming to be scientific, but what he gives is speculation - something prior even to the formation of a hypothesis." (cited in Barrett, 1972: 44)[2]

In Wittgenstein's view, the only reason these speculations have gained a certain popularity in the mind of the public is through their "appeal", or their "charm" as explanations: "The picture of people having unconscious thoughts has a charm. The idea of an underworld, a secret cellar. Something hidden, uncanny... A lot of things one is ready to believe because they are uncanny." (cited in Cioffi, 1969: 186) Pursuing a similar line of thought, Fish attributes the "appeal" of Freudian propositions to the peculiar "discursive power" of which and by which they have been constructed. The true content of Freudian explanations, according to Fish, is the story of their

making, the story of "persuasion... practised on a massive scale", in which the reader only believes what he is told because he has "fallen totally under the control of the teller."[3]

But what of Fish's own often formidable powers of persuasion? What of his own talent for verbal manipulation, his carefully cultivated discursive skills? Who now is the teller, and what, if subjected to closer scrutiny, are the "true contents" of his tale?

II

We'll begin by examining Fish's investigation of the third paragraph of Chapter One of the Wolf-Man case history. In this paragraph, Freud weighs the virtues and defects of two possible methodologies in the analysis of infantile neuroses. The two possibilities, as Fish notes, are (1) analysing a childhood disorder when it first manifests itself in infancy, or (2) waiting until the patient is an "intellectually mature adult".

"Since Freud is at this very moment engaged in the second practice," writes Fish, "it is not surprising that he decides in favour of it, but he must find a way to defend it against the objection (which he anticipates) that because of the passage of time what results will be the product of interpretation. He replies by asserting that interpretation will play an even greater part if the child is examined directly because 'too many words and thoughts have to be lent' to him. In contrast, when one analyses an adult, these 'limitations' do not obtain, although one must then 'take into account the distortion and refurbishing to which

a patient's past is subjected when it is looked back upon'." (1986: 935)

On examination, Fish finds this to be a "curious contrast" since, as he points out, "it is hard to tell the difference between 'lending words' and 'refurbishing'." The only reason the contrast works, in Fish's eyes, lies in the way that "the sentence shifts the burden of 'refurbishing' on to the patient." This Fish interprets as a "brilliant move" on Freud's part, which allows him to "admit interpretation into the scene while identifying it as the work of another, leaving himself the (honourable) work of undoing its effects. In only a few sentences," concludes the critic, "[Freud] has managed to twice distance himself from the charge of suggestion, first by pushing it off on to the practitioners of a rival method, and second by making it into a property of the illness of which his now innocent labours are to be the cure." (1986: 935)

Embedded in this sequence are a number of accusations directed against the analyst: (1) that Freud's "defence" of his present methodology is based more on expedience than on an objective balancing of the pros and cons of both possible procedures (2) that underlying this supposed "defence" is an attempt to justify any element of interpretation which the analysis might entail, and to falsely identify it as the work of the patient whereas in fact it is the work of the analyst himself; and (3) that disguised beneath a surface discussion on questions of methodology is a concealed attempt, on the part of the analyst, to "distance himself from the charge of suggestion."

Considering that the body of Fish's criticism is directed against the power of "suggestion" which he feels to be the greatest danger inherent in the practice of "interpretation" - one which must necessarily throw into

question the results of any psychoanalytic session - it is curious to find that his own criticisms are based exclusively on the very practice he cannot countenance in Freud: in this case, his own efforts to "interpret" the Freudian text in question.[4] Indeed, a return to the original paragraph under examination (which Fish significantly does not quote in full) reveals the critic's own penchant for "lending words" and "refurbishing", so that in the end, it is tempting to suggest that what is at stake is not Freud's attempt to defend himself against the charge of suggestion by identifying his own interpretations as "the work of another", but Fish's attempt to deflect the reader's critical gaze from his own tendency to "act by suggestion" by attributing this tendency instead to Freud.

"Since Freud is at this very moment engaged in the second practice, it is not surprising that he decides in favour of it, but he must find a way to defend it against the objection ... that because of the passage of time what results will be the product of interpretation," writes Fish, suggesting, firstly, a firm rejection on Freud's part of what Fish (rather than Freud) describes as the "rival method" in favour of that in which he is presently engaged, and secondly, the need to justify his decision.

In fact, no such rejection appears in the original text, which reads, in full, as follows:

> My description will therefore deal with an infantile neurosis which was analysed not while it actually existed, but only fifteen years after its termination. This state of things has its advantages as well as its disadvantages in comparison with the alternative. An analysis which is conducted upon a neurotic child itself must, as a matter of course, appear to be more

> trustworthy, but it cannot be very rich in material; too many words and thoughts have to be lent to the child, and even so the deepest strata may turn out to be impenetrable to consciousness. An analysis of a childhood disorder through the medium of recollection in an intellectually mature adult is free from these limitations; but it necessitates our taking into account the distortion and refurbishing to which a person's own past is subjected when it is looked back upon from a later period. The first alternative perhaps gives the more convincing results; the second is by far the more instructive. (1918[1914]: 235)

Rather than a firm rejection of one method in favour of the alternative (which Fish reads into the text to form the basis of his criticisms), what the text itself reveals is a careful balancing of the advantages and disadvantages of both. According to Freud, where the method he is not using is more "trustworthy" - a word Fish conveniently ignores - that presently in use is "richer in material"; where the alternative would "give the more convincing results", the method in use is "more instructive".[6] The earlier mentioned charge that Freud's "defence" of his technique is based on expedience begins to fall away when what is described by Fish as a "defensive strategy" turns out to be little more than a (disinterested) account of alternative methodologies.

The validity of Fish's critical assertions is further weakened if one stops to question not only the strength of his interpretation of Freud's text, but the very logic of his assumptions. It is difficult to imagine why Freud, as Fish suggests, should feel the need to "defend [his present practice] against the objection...that because of the passage of time what results will be the product of interpretation", when the very "products" that

interpretation provides themselves constitute the material upon which the analyst frames his hypotheses as to the patient's infantile sexuality, and through which he is then led to the motive forces of the neurotic symptoms of later life. According to Fish, Freud's choice of procedure is defended by an alleged "assertion" that "interpretation will play an even greater part if the child is examined directly because 'too many words and thoughts have to be lent' to him." Once again, it is to Fish that the work of interpretation must be attributed. What Freud in fact asserts is that "an analysis which is conducted upon a neurotic child... cannot be very rich in material; too many words and thoughts have to be lent to the child, and even so the deepest strata may turn out to be impenetrable to consciousness." (my emphasis) What Freud objects to is not the part necessarily played by interpretation, but the very sparsity of material for interpretation that such an analysis must provide.

It is also Fish's claim that underlying Freud's "defensive strategies" (the existence of which, as I have pointed out, is more a creation of Fish's than of Freud's) is an underhand attempt to "shift the burden of 'refurbishing' on to the patient" (my emphasis) so as to "admit interpretation into the scene while identifying it as the work of another..." Astonishingly, the very introduction of the "patient" into Freud's original text is the work of Fish, not of the author. The offending sentence - that which, according to Fish, "shifts the burden of refurbishing onto the patient..." - reads as follows in the original: "An analysis of a childhood disorder through the medium of recollection in an intellectually mature adult... necessitates our taking into account the distortion and refurbishing to which a person's own past is subjected when it is looked back upon from a later period." In Fish's rendition of the same sentence, he takes it upon himself to

substitute the word "patient" for Freud's decidedly more neutral "person", thus introducing into Freud's original statement an element of specificity for which the author was never responsible, but which nicely supports Fish's central thesis. Indeed, the coercion could not be more obvious; but we soon begin to find that it is executed by Fish, not, as he would have us believe, by Freud.

Finally, the isolation of the paragraph in question, and its subsequent emphasis in the reader's consciousness, is itself a coercive strategy employed by Fish to direct the reader's attention, in the interests of his own argument, away from what is actually at stake: namely, the "high theoretical interest" that any analysis of childhood neurosis, whatever the limitations of the methodology, must hold for psychoanalysis. As Freud makes clear in the paragraph immediately following the over-emphasized passage in question, "In any case it may be maintained that analysis of children's neuroses can claim to possess a specially high theoretical interest." (1918[1914]: 235; my emphasis) Later, in Chapter Two, Freud stresses that "analyses such as this are not published in order to produce conviction in the minds of those whose attitude has hitherto been recusant and sceptical. The intention is only to bring forward some new facts for investigators who have already been convinced by their own clinical experiences." (1918[1914]: 240) Far more important than the necessity for a means to confirm the accuracy of all interpretative details brought to light by the analysis, is the evidence the case history provides for the existence of infantile sexuality. This is the theoretical value of the case in Freud's view, and the reason for its publication, and it is this theoretical value that Fish evades by distracting the reader's attention to methodological questions of secondary significance.

III

We have seen that Fish opens his paper by focusing on questions of methodology, while evading any serious confrontation with the theoretical issues underlying the Wolf-Man's case history. We have also seen the extent to which Fish relies on purely interpretive procedures to support his arguments, and that the accuracy of his interpretations can be questioned on a number of grounds if one returns to Freud's original texts. As such, Fish's paper both reflects and perpetuates the history of reduction and distortion which has characterized the development of psychoanalysis.[6] Further examination will reveal that in his criticisms Fish is also guilty of what Juliet Mitchell describes as the "unconscious denial of the unconscious". Mitchell suggests that no understanding of Freud's work is possible without some grasp of two fundamental theories: firstly, the nature of unconscious mental life and the laws that govern its behaviour, and secondly, the meaning of sexuality in human life:

> It is... a characteristic of most attacks on Freud's work that, though the criticism <u>seems</u> to be over specific issues, what is really being rejected is [the] whole intellectual framework of psychoanalysis... There is formal obeisance to Freud's theories, yet behind most criticism of details there lies an unacknowledged refusal of every major concept. Time and time again, one dissident after another has repudiated singly or wholesale all the main scientific tenets of psychoanalysis. (1974: 5)

The first indication of his denial of the unconscious, amongst other major concepts of psychoanalysis, is Fish's evasion of them. At no stage, during the first section of his paper, does Fish attempt to confront or come to terms with any of the theoretical premisses upon which the analysis is based. This pattern continues well into Section II, at which point Fish gives his fullest attention to another passage of secondary significance, this time dealing with questions of narrative technique: "I am unable," writes Freud, "to give either a purely historical or a purely thematic account of my patient's story; I can write a history neither of the treatment nor of the illness, but I shall find myself obliged to combine the two methods of presentation." (1918[1914]: 240)

"A 'purely historical' account," responds Fish, "would be a narrative account tracing out relationships of cause and effect; and by declaring that he is unable to provide it, Freud releases himself from the requirement that in his explanations one thing be shown to follow another. A 'purely thematic' account would be one in which the coherence of events and details was a matter of their relationship to a single master theme; and by declaring that he is unable to provide *it*, Freud releases himself from the requirement that his explanations go together to form a unified whole. In effect, he neutralizes criticism of his conclusions before they are offered and is in the enviable position of being at once the architect and judge of his own performance." (1986: 936)

Fish's response is revealing, for it provides us with evidence for what, in Fish's view, constitute narrative "requirements". First, there is the "requirement" (from which Freud has ostensibly "released himself") that "in [the author's] explanations one thing be shown to follow another." Second, there is the "requirement" (which Freud

has once again managed to "evade") that "[the author's] explanations go together to form a unified whole." These, of course, are also the requirements of most forms of conscious perception, which tend to insist that it is in the nature of all "explanations" that they proceed according to clear relations of cause and effect. Fish is astute enough to realize that the explanation behind Freud's inability to meet those requirements lies precisely in "the nature of the unconscious, which, [Freud] tells us, is not a linear structure ruled by the law of contradiction, but a geological accumulation of forms that never completely disappear and live side by side in an uneasy and unpredictable vacillation." Fish is disturbed by this explanation for he fears the freedom it allows the narrator, the altogether too "favourable" rhetorical situation it seems to provide - one which, according to Fish, "neutralizes criticism" of Freud's conclusions "even before they are offered". But the real reason for Fish's discomfort is clearly his own underlying denial of the unconscious itself - a rejection which is barely disguised in Fish's allegation some lines later that "the unconscious is not a concept but a rhetorical device, a place holder which can be given whatever shape the polemical moment requires." (1986: 936) Later still, we will find out that, for Fish, "a rhetorical object... is entirely constructed and stands without external support; it is, we are accustomed to say, removed from reality..." (1986: 938) If the unconscious is, in Fish's view, just such a "rhetorical" object, then in Fish's view, it can have nothing to do with "reality". Fish has recognized, as he tells us at the end of his paper, that "the thesis of psychoanalysis is that one cannot get to the side of the unconscious". Indeed, he is living proof of the fact - for he cannot get to the side of his own unconscious desire that all explanations proceed along the lines of conscious perception, or that "one thing be shown to follow another" in the formation of a coherent and "unified whole".

What Fish in fact requires is no less than a definitive understanding of all psychical processes from the point of view of consciousness, a requirement which, as Mitchell observes, is characteristic of most traditional opposition to Freud's theories: "It is no accident that, for all their differences, Reich's, Laing's and the feminists' theories come to resemble one another in so many ways. All these writers deny the unconscious - Reich by finding it to be nothing other than a pool of biological energy, Laing by treating its constructs as though they were identical to those of consciousness, the feminist critics by believing above all in social actuality and conscious choice." (1974: 356)

Ironically, Fish objects to Freud's interpretation of the Wolf-Man's dream on the grounds that it is too "authoritative", too "finished" and "enclosed" - the same grounds on which he objects to the narrative as a whole, and to Peter Brooks' reading of it (in Reading for the Plot; 1984) as a "radically modernist" text, a "structure of indeterminacy" and "undecidability" which "perilously destabilizes belief in... exhaustive accounts whose authority derives from the force of closure. "On the contrary," suggests Fish, "... we can note that Freud's own characterization of his narrative insists precisely on those qualities Brooks would deny to it: completeness, exhaustiveness, authority, and above all, closure." (1986: 936)

Freud's "own characterization" of his narrative, according to Fish, is to be found in a footnote as he begins to interpret the wolf dream: "it is always a strict law of dream-interpretation that an explanation must be found for every detail." (1918[1914]: 274) But Fish's objection is based on a misunderstanding of - or at least, on too

simplistic an approach to - what Freud means when he uses the word "explanation". Because he approaches all explanations from the point of view of consciousness, Fish, like Wittgenstein, sees all explanations as end-points in the process of interpretation rather than starting-points. The importance, for Freud, of finding "explanations" for every detail of a dream lies not in the revelation of ultimate meanings they provide, in their "completeness", "exhaustiveness" or their "force of closure", but in the link they set up between the latent dream-thoughts and the manifest dream-content. The finding of this link is paramount in the operation of dream interpretation because it is only once this link has been brought to light that the process of interpretation can truly begin.

> The transformation of the latent dream-thoughts into the manifest dream-content deserves all our attention, since it is the first instance known to us of psychical material being changed over from one mode of expression which is immediately intelligible to us to another which we can only come to understand with the help of guidance and effort, though it too must be recognized as a function of our mental activity. (from The Interpretation of Dreams PLF 4, cited in Habermas, 1968: 220)

In relation to the above passage, Habermas suggests that "the technique of dream interpretation goes beyond the art of hermeneutics insofar as it must grasp not only the meaning of a possibly distorted text, but the meaning of the text distortion itself, that is the transformation of a latent dream thought into the manifest dream. In other words, it must reconstruct what Freud calls the 'dream-work'. The interpretation of dreams leads to a process of

reflection that takes the same course as the genesis of the dream text, only in reverse. It is complementary to the dream-work. In this process the analyst can call on free association to individual elements of the dream as well as on subsequent spontaneous additions to the dream text as it was first communicated." (1968: 221)

Far from leading to "completeness" and closure, the explanations which Freud refers to in his footnote may be seen to open up the dream text to a process whereby the uppermost dream layer, or the "dream facade" can be identified and removed. What follows is a complex interpretative operation obstructed by strong forces of resistance which may protract the process of interpretation over a number of years, and which may well prevent a point of "closure" from ever being reached.

This brings us to what is perhaps one of the most significant features of Fish's essay - its failure to distinguish between the operations of literary analysis and dream interpretation. In "Meaning and Dream Interpretation", Fredric Weiss tackles a number of questions relating to this distinction which are blatantly ignored by Fish: What type of meaning is Freud establishing for a dream-report? What are the relationships between a dream-report, the subject's "associations", and the meaning assigned to the report? (Weiss, 1974: 55) Weiss suggests that Freud's dream interpretation has similarities to the interpretation of aesthetic objects, such as poems or films. But as soon as the view of dream interpretation as activity analogous to art interpretation is expanded, it begins to run into difficulties. For example, as Weiss points out, "Freud does not apply to 'associations' the criterion of consistency with context which is used to judge an interpretation of a poem as correct or incorrect. Moreover, he makes no attempt to measure a person's 'associations'

against <u>any</u> criterion, to judge them right or wrong, allowable or not allowable... 'Right', 'wrong', 'allowable', 'not allowable', 'plausible', 'far-fetched', 'relevant', 'extraneous', and any other such characterizations do not apply to 'associations'. If the subject's associations do lead to a meaning, that is the meaning which the psychoanalyst assigns to the dream-report: it cannot be rejected on any such ground as incompatibility with the dream-report, and the analyst makes no attempt to reject it on any ground." (Weiss, 1974: 57)

In psychoanalysis, trains of associations are pursued not simply to discover the meaning that may be inherent in a dream-report, but "for the sake of whatever they may be leading to, providing that what they are leading to is or reveals something about the subject... There may be no attempt to assign everything to which the 'associations' lead, to the dream-report as its meaning. All reference to the dream-report may be dropped; the question of what meaning is to be assigned to it tends to fade out of consideration." (Weiss, 1974: 58) What Freud establishes during the interpretation of a dream, is what Weiss calls a "meaning-for the subject": "It is a meaning-for him in the respect that <u>he gives it</u>: the meaning-for him of something is what it means to him, not what anyone else might or would have to make of it." (Weiss, 1974: 64)

Fish's earliest objection to the Wolf-Man's interpretation of his dream is to the "act of construction" which leads the patient to the "explanation" for one particularly significant detail: "Freud tells us that although the patient recalled the dream at a 'very early stage in the analysis', its 'interpretation was a task that dragged on over several years' without notable success. The breakthrough, as it is reported, came in an instant and apparently without preparation: 'One day the patient began

to continue with the interpretation of the dream. He thought that the part of the dream which said... "suddenly the window opened of its own accord" was not completely explained'. Immediately and without explanation, the explanation came forth: 'it must mean: "my eyes suddenly opened." I was asleep... and suddenly woke up, and as I woke up I saw something: the tree with the wolves.' It is important to note that the patient does not say, 'Now I remember', but rather, 'It must mean.' His is not an act of recollection, but of construction..." (1986: 935)

Fish objects to this interpretation on two counts: (1) that is constructed rather than remembered, thereby leaving room to question its consistency with the "true" meaning of the dream-report; and (2) that the patient is "compelled" to this particular interpretation (among all those he might have hit upon) not through his own efforts, but through the persuasive techniques of the analyst.

Freud's theory of dreams itself renders the first objection invalid since the criterion of "consistency with context" which is used to judge the interpretation of a poem as correct or incorrect does not apply to the subject's associations in dream analysis. Indeed, such acts of "construction" may be essential if the process of interpretation is going to lead to the source of the neuroses underlying the dream itself. Further, they may issue either from the patient or from the physician, in the first stage towards, rather than as substitutes for, the patient's process of recollection. Thus the physician "reconstructs what has been forgotten from the faulty texts of the [patient], from his dreams, associations, and repetitions, while the [patient], animated by the constructions suggested by the physician as hypotheses, remembers..." (Habermas, 1968: 230) Most significant of all, as Habermas makes clear, "only the patient's

recollection decides the accuracy of the construction." Fish fails to grasp either the hypothetical nature of these constructions, or their role in the ongoing rather than static process of recollection.

As far as the second objection is concerned, Freud would hardly have stressed the method by which he "induced" the patient to speak had he considered it to be inconsistent with his theoretical aims. Neither can his reference to this exercise of "inexorable pressure" be shrugged off as an unfortunate but revealing verbal slip on the part of the author. On the contrary, Freud's reference to his analytical practice in this case would have been included precisely to emphasize the necessity for strong forces of persuasion to counteract the patient's unconscious forces of resistance to the analysis. Certainly, Freud would have encouraged, perhaps even "compelled" or "persuaded", the patient to speak, for this was his task as an analyst - to help the patient 'overcome certain resistances - ...those which, earlier, made the material concerned into something repressed by rejecting it from the conscious." (1915a: 167) But it is an "act of construction" par excellence on the part of Fish to suggest that Freud's persuasive methods were extended, in this case, to elicit the content of the interpretation they produced. Nowhere in the Wolf-Man case history (or for that matter in Fish's response to it) is there any concrete evidence to suggest that the analogy between the window opening and the young boy awakening should have been attributed to the analyst rather than to the patient.

We now see that at the same time that Fish rejects the hypothesis of the unconscious, he betrays his underlying scepticism with regard to another of psychoanalysis' major concepts: namely, that of resistance. For he is apparently unable to accept that "persuasion" is a necessary counter-

force to the patient's unconscious forces of resistance. Indeed, the experience of "resistance", suggests Habermas, is no less than the "starting point of psychoanalytic theory" (Habermas, 1968: 229) - a claim substantiated by Freud in a number of passages in which he draws attention to its theoretical importance, and to the way in which it determines and delineates the nature of the analyst's task:

> It is a long superceded idea, and one derived from superficial appearances, that the patient suffers from a sort of ignorance, and that if one removes this ignorance by giving him information (about the causal connection of his illness with his life, about his experiences in childhood, and so on) he is bound to recover. The pathological factor is not his ignorance in itself, but the root of this ignorance in his inner resistances; it was they that first called this ignorance into being, and they still maintain it now. The task of the treatment lies in combating these resistances. Informing the patient of what he does not know because he has repressed it is only one of the necessary preliminaries to the treatment. If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psychoanalysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him. Such measures, however, have as much influence on the symptoms of nervous illness as a distribution of menu-cards in a time of famine has upon hunger. The analogy goes even further than its immediate application; for informing the patient of his unconscious regularly results in an intensification of the conflict in him and an exacerbation of his troubles. (cited in Habermas, 1968: 230)

Naturally, Freud was acutely aware of the contradictions which his project - to discover and explain the mechanisms and effects of the unconscious - entailed. For he had to discover how to register unconscious mental processes without this registration being distorted by the effects of consciousness. Time and again, throughout his professional career, Freud would return to the same fundamental problem with which he opens his paper on the unconscious in the "metapsychological papers" of 1915: "How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious? It is of course only as something conscious that we know it, after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious..." (1915a: 167) And later, in "The Ego and the Id": "Now all our knowledge is invariably bound up with consciousness. We can come to know even the Ucs. only by making it conscious. But stop, how is that possible? What does it mean when we say 'making something conscious'? How can that come about?" (1915b: 357)

The fact of resistance is crucial in the answer to these questions, for it is only through the clarification and subsequent elimination of resistances that the effects of the unconscious can be brought to consciousness. Thus Freud goes on to say, in the earlier paper, that "psychoanalytic work shows us every day that translation of this kind [ie. from unconscious to conscious] is possible. In order that this should come about, the person under analysis must overcome certain resistances - the same resistances as those which, earlier, made the material concerned into something repressed by rejecting it from the conscious." (1915a: 167) In "The Ego and the Id", Freud elaborates on this statement by suggesting that "the reason why [unconscious] ideas cannot become conscious is that a certain force opposes them, that otherwise they could become conscious, and that it would then be apparent how little they differ from other elements which are admittedly

psychical. The fact that in the technique of psychoanalysis a means has been found by which the opposing force can be removed and the ideas in question made conscious renders this theory irrefutable. The state in which the ideas existed before being made conscious is called repression, and we assert that the force which instituted the repression and maintains it is perceived as resistance during the work of analysis." (1915b: 357)

Fish's criticisms reveal his own subjection to powerful forces of resistance - resistance to what Freud has described as the "first shibboleth of psychoanalysis": the fact that the "essence" of the psychical cannot be situated in consciousness. His consequent denial of the unconscious entails his denial of the concept of resistance, and so the cycle perpetuates itself as, scattered through the remaining pages of his paper, we come up against a string of further associated rejections:

Of the theory of distortion in dreams, Fish goes one step further than the traditional complaint that it is too "arbitrary" to suggest that it constitutes yet another purposive strategy to sway the course of the analysis in whatever direction the analyst chooses:

> One critic has objected to [Freud's interpretation of the Wolf-Man's succession of dreams concerned with aggressive actions against his sister and governess] as one of Freud's "apparently arbitrary inversions", but it is far from arbitrary for it is in effect a precise and concise direction to both the patient and the reader, providing them with a method for dealing with the material they will soon meet, and telling them in advance what will result when the method is applied: "if you want to know what something - a dream, a piece

> of neurotic behaviour - means, simply reverse its apparent significance, and what you will find is an attempt to preserve masculine self-esteem against the threat of passivity and femininity." The real seduction in this chapter... is the seduction not of the patient by his sister, but of both the patient and the reader by Freud, who will now be able to produce interpretative conclusions in the confidence that they will be accepted as the conclusions of an inevitable and independent logic. (1986: 936)

The content of Freud's alleged "precise and concise direction to the reader" is (as we are not altogether surprised to discover by this time) another of Fish's "acts of construction" - the result of his own work of interpretation neatly disguised as a quotation from Freud. What it constitutes is indeed a "precise and concise direction to the reader" - but to Fish's reader not Freud's - to attribute his own interpretive conclusions to Freud in the interests of strengthening the logic of his argument.

Fish's next rejection concerns the existence of phantasies. Fish objects to the uncertainty surrounding the evocation of the "primal scene" - the picture of copulation between the Wolf-Man's parents - since its status, as Freud himself admits, is that of an "assumption". At another point, Freud refers to the same "assumption" as an "unimpeachable fact", and it is at this point that Fish pounces, in the belief that he has uncovered yet another error of logic with which to amplify his case against Freud: "Everything happens so fast in this sequence," complains Fish, "that we may not notice that the 'unimpeachable fact' which anchors it is the <u>assumption</u> of the primal scene. In most arguments assumptions are what must be proved, but in this argument the assumption is offered as proof; and what

supports it is not any independent fact, but the polemical fact that without the assumption the story Freud has so laboriously constructed falls apart." (1986: 938) Whether the "primal scene" ever actually took place, or was simply a phantasy on the part of the patient, is, as Freud stresses, of no significance. But it is significant for Fish, since his denial of the unconscious prevents him from acknowledging that central to the very concept of the phantasy, is the thesis that in the unconscious mind of the patient, it is indistinguishable from fact, and must therefore be treated as such in the analytic situation.

Fish's final claim is that the thesis of psychoanalysis (that one cannot get to the side of the unconscious) is "one and the same" with the thesis of his essay (that one cannot get to the side of rhetoric). In effect, this is a claim that repeats his analogy between the unconscious and "rhetorical objects", both of which are, in Fish's definition, constructs, removed from reality, and standing entirely without external support. It is a final and conclusive restatement of his denial of the unconscious, and in the end, we find that Mitchell's assertion - that "time and time again, one dissident after another has repudiated singly or wholesale all the main scientific tenets of psychoanalysis" - holds good for Fish as well.

IV

Of course, Fish is not a psychoanalyst. He is a literary critic - one who is so finely trained in the art of literary interpretation that he has been moved to declare that, where critical activity is concerned, "like it or not, interpretation is the only game in town". (1980: 355) By

this he means to say that meanings are not embedded in texts, but depend entirely on the interpretive activities of the reader; that texts are "unstable entities" whose meanings are determined by, and "develop in a dynamic relationship with the reader's expectations, projections, conclusions, judgements and assumptions..." (1980: 2) In this formulation, "the reader's response is not to the meaning, it is the meaning..."; or, in other words, "linguistic and textual facts, rather than being the objects of interpretation, are its products." (1980: 3)

According to Fish's theory, the reader's interpretations are shaped by the "interpretive community" of which he is a member. Members of the same "interpretive community" will, in Fish's view, share the same sets of assumptions, the same sets of "interpretive strategies" and, consequently, the same "ways of reading". "In other words, there is no single way of reading that is correct or natural, only 'ways of reading' that are extensions of community perspectives." It follows, for Fish, that "the business of criticism is not... to determine a correct way of reading but to determine from which of a number of possible perspectives reading will proceed." (1980: 16)

Nowhere in Fish's theory of reading does he account for the possibility that amongst those "possible perspectives" from which reading may proceed, there will be some which are appropriate to the text in question and some which are not. This weakness in his theoretical position shows up in practice in his reading of the Wolf-Man case history, for he reads it from a perspective of consciousness which is totally inappropriate to it.

Fish argues for a model of critical activity which he describes as a model of "persuasion", in which "prejudicial or perspectival perception is all there is, and the question

is [simply] from which of a number of equally interested perspectives will the text be constituted." (1980: 366) The "whole of critical activity", argues Fish, "is an attempt on the part of one party to alter the beliefs of another so that the evidence cited by the first will be seen as evidence by the second." The model of critical activity which Fish opposes in this argument is, as he points out, one in which the procedure is exactly the reverse: "evidence available apart from any particular belief is brought in to judge between competing beliefs, or, as we call them in literary studies, interpretations. This is a model derived from an analogy to the procedures of logic and scientific inquiry, and basically it is a model of demonstration in which interpretations are either confirmed or disconfirmed by the facts that are independently specified." (1980: 365)

The business of this essay is not to point out the serious limitations of Fish's idea of what constitutes "criticism" in the field of literary studies. For the moment, the theoretical argument drawn up by Fish interests me only to the extent that his enthusiasm for the activity of interpretation and for its associated model of "persuasion" over that of "demonstration" has led him to superimpose the former model on the texts of Sigmund Freud, and to see the whole of psychoanalysis, quite unproblematically, as "just another form of interpretation".

It is Habermas who makes the pertinent observation that although psychoanalysis gives the appearance of a special form of "interpretation", it is in fact something more:

> Initially, psychoanalysis appears only as a special form of interpretation. It provides theoretical perspectives and technical rules for the interpretation of symbolic structures. Freud always patterned the

> interpretation of dreams after the hermeneutic model of philological research. Occasionally he compares it to the translation of a foreign author: of a text by Livy, for example. But the interpretive effort of the analyst distinguishes itself from that of the philologist not only through the crystallization of a special object domain. It requires a specifically expanded hermeneutics, one that, in contrast to the usual method of interpretation in the cultural sciences, takes into account a <u>new dimension</u>. (1968: 215)

What ultimately shapes this "new dimension" in the interpretive efforts of the analyst is the unconscious itself. Indeed, it must ultimately shape <u>all</u> interpretive operations for as soon as it is perceived not as a "second consciousness" but as a particular "psychical locality" with its own contents, its own mechanisms and specific "energy", which is eternally present, and of which consciousness is simply an added "quality", then even the interpretive possibilities of the very language we speak must be expanded to take it into account. Thus Freud has remarked, "In our science as in the others the problem is the same: Behind the attributes (qualities) of the object under examination which are presented directly to our perception, we have to discover something else which is more independent of the particular receptive capacity of our sense organs and which approximates more closely to what may be supposed to be the real state of affairs." (cited in Nagel, 1974: 12) Stanley Fish would do well to take this "new dimension" into account in any further hermeneutic forays he may be contemplating into the work of Sigmund Freud.

NOTES

1. A collection of papers presented at the colloquium has since been published under the title The Linguistics of Writing - Arguments between Language and Literature, edited by Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant and Colin MacCabe (Manchester University Press, 1987). As this essay was written before the appearance of the book, however, all page references to Fish's article will be to the TLS version.

2. For further references to the "huge literature focusing on the issues of evidence and testability", see Fish's list in The Linguistics of Writing - Arguments between Language and Literature (Manchester UP, 1987) footnote 5, pp. 171-172.

3. The same fundamental objection is embedded in Sebastiano Timpanaro's reference to the "captious and sophistical method, resistant to any verification, quick to force interpretations to secure pre-ordained proofs, employed by Freud and Freudians in their explanation of slips, dreams and neurotic symptoms." (The Freudian Slip, New Left Books, 1976, p. 14) Traditionally, and prior to the work of the French women's liberation group Psychoanalyse et Politique, feminists have rooted their objections in similar ground. For a comprehensive survey of, and response to this tradition, see Mitchell, 1974. The work of Mitchell's text is to defend psychoanalysis against this claim, and to show that because those feminists in opposition to Freud try to discuss his concept of femininity outside the framework of psychoanalysis, their objections, and even their tributes, cannot be made to stand up. She also reveals that their rejection of the scientific status of psychoanalysis would be more accurately described as a

rejection of its two most crucial discoveries: the unconscious, and infantile sexuality.

4. I am not persuaded by Fish's attempts to dissolve this contradiction, in the final section of his paper, by declaring that no-one can get to the side of rhetoric, that "being persuasive, assuming the stance of a rhetorician, is not something you can choose to avoid" - a statement which, in the end, neither renders his interpretive efforts more convincing, nor vindicates his arguments. The rest of this paper will be dedicated to demonstrating why.

5. For further discussion of methodological approaches to the analysis of infantile neuroses, see Freud, 1909: 169.

6. For an elaboration on this point, see Althusser, 1984. Althusser suggests that one of the difficulties facing anyone attempting to understand and assess Freud's work today is to cross the "vast space of ideological prejudice" that divides us from Freud through the reduction of his "revolutionary discovery" of the unconscious to disciplines essentially foreign to it - including that of psychology itself: "Western reason ...will only agree to conclude a pact of peaceful existence with psychoanalysis after years of non-recognition, contempt and insults...on condition of annexing it to its own sciences and myths..." (1984: 186) This history of mythologization has had far-reaching effects on the reception of Freud's ideas: First, it has resulted in a displacement of the object of psychoanalysis from what analytical technique deals with in the analytical practice of the cure (the unconscious) to analytical practice, or the "cure" itself. Second, it has prevented the successful

transferral from a form of critical attention which is itself dominated by a problematic of consciousness to one which starts from a recognition of the primary role played by the unconscious. Hence a form of criticism has arisen whose critical focus is misdirected, and which is based on preconceptions inimical to an adequate response to Freud's ideas.

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CHAPTER THREE

DORA: MOMENTS OF MODERNISM

The subject of this essay is Freud's first great case history, Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria, better known as the case of "Dora" - Freud's pseudonym for a young woman who began treatment with him in the autumn of 1900. From her early childhood, Dora had suffered intermittent hysterical symptoms - both mental and physical - and was finally presented to Freud for therapy at the age of eighteen after her father's discovery of a note in which she threatened suicide because "as she said, she could no longer endure her life." Dora herself had been unwilling to undergo treatment from the start: "It was only her father's authority," Freud tells us, "that induced her to come to me at all." Freud never completed the treatment, which was called off by Dora herself after only three months.

Since its publication in 1905, Freud's account of his treatment of Dora has been widely discussed, not only by analysts, but - particularly over the last several years - by literary critics as well. A rich and varied selection of essays on the case, many of them by literary critics, was recently published by Columbia University Press in a volume called In Dora's Case. In this essay, I propose once again to re-open the case, but first, by way of introduction, I want to focus in some detail on a recent article by Toril Moi, entitled Patriarchal Thought and the Desire for Knowledge. My reasons for doing so should become clear as the essay proceeds.

I

Focusing on psychoanalytic theories of knowledge, sexuality, and sexual identity, Toril Moi suggests that at one level, Freudian psychoanalysis can be characterized as an effort to open up and extend the field of rational knowledge: "Perhaps the analytic situation may be seen as a different model of structuring knowledge," she writes, "one that forces us steadily to reflect on the points of exclusion, repression, and blockage, in our own discursive constructions..." (1989: 196)

Moi is here referring particularly to what she calls the very specific "dialogic" situation created by psychoanalytic practice as it is known today, and as it evolved from the first analytical sessions between Freud and his hysterical patients. These sessions between analyst and mental patient were crucially different from any that had gone before. As Moi points out: "Unlike Charcot, who chose to exhibit his hysterical patients in a gesture of dominance, Freud decided to listen to them: psychoanalysis is born in the encounter between the hysterical woman and the positivist man of science." (1989: 196) It is in this reversal of the traditional roles of subject and object, of speaker and listener, Moi suggests, that Freud more or less unwittingly opens the way for a new understanding of human knowledge.

Moi has arrived at this point in her essay (to which I will return later) after a brief survey of some recent attempts amongst feminists to criticize, and propose alternatives to, certain forms of structured thought which have been variously labelled "male science", "male theory", or "male rationality". These traditional modes of

knowledge, they have argued, are inextricably linked with traditional sexualized - and sexist - categories of dominance and oppression. Their claim (as represented by Moi) is that (male) science, philosophy, rationality - call it what you will - constantly re-enacts the Cartesian mind/body divide, in which, the argument goes,

> ...always and everywhere the rational, active, masculine intellect operates on the passive, objectified, feminized body. To be intellectual - to think? - under patriarchy... is willy-nilly to take up a position marked as masculine. If one doesn't, one has no option but to embrace the other side of the tedious series of homologous patriarchal oppositions, where irrationality and thoughtlessness is equated with femininity, the body, object-being, emotionality, and so on. (1989: 189)

According to Moi, the most influential arguments against the so-called "male science" have been put forward by Evelyn Fox Keller, whose main enemy is the concept of "objectivity", which she sees as the ruling ideological paradigm of the natural sciences. In Keller's critique, scientific ideology divides the world into "two parts - the knower (mind) and the knowable (nature)", and insists that the relation between "knower and known is one of distance and separation... that between a subject and object radically divided". Having divided the world, patriarchal ideology <u>genders</u> the two halves. Nature, objectified and oppressed, is female, whereas knowledge is characterized as male: "The characterization of both the scientific mind and its modes of access to knowledge as masculine is indeed significant. Masculine here connotes, as it so often does, autonomy, separation and distance. It connotes a radical

rejection of any commingling of subject and object, which are, it now appears, quite consistently identified as male and female." (1989: 189-190) Feminists, Keller argues, should refuse to accept this male vision of the subject/object division; instead she proposes a "commingling" of the two, or an empathetic "feeling" for the object, where it is no longer reified but respected in its integrity.

Moi is sceptical both about the decision to label traditional science "male" (Why not "patriarchal"? she suggests; just as all women are not feminist, not all males are patriarchal) and to call the new mode of knowledge "female". Why imply, she asks, that this new mode somehow is less suitable for males? She is also sceptical about the usefulness of seeing all forms of intellectual mastery simply as aggressive control and domination. To be consistent, Moi points out, the denunciation of all possible forms of mastery would logically have to include the rejection, not only of "rapacious exploitation of natural resources, nuclear weapons, and dictatorship, but of agriculture, house-building, and bicycling as well". (1989: 193)

Also, while Moi finds Keller's critique of dominant forms of what she calls Cartesian rationalism "inspiring"; her denunciation of the logic of domination and objectification at work in the ideology of science "timely"; while she warms particularly to the idea put forward by Keller of undoing the split between reason and emotion - of finding a place for <u>feeling</u> within science - on the whole, she finds Keller's analysis of knowledge and feminism "somewhat disappointing". This is because, as she argues convincingly, Keller's analysis never quite manages to break free of what Moi calls the "straitjacket of patriarchal binary thought", in the end remaining trapped by the very

categories of the scientific ideology it sets out to read. "There is no attempt here to question the logic that underpins patriarchal metaphysics, or to contest the very meaning of terms such as masculine/feminine, reason/emotion, and so on..." (1989: 193)

In preference, Moi turns to the "deconstructive onslaughts" on these very sets of (patriarchal) oppositions which have come from thinkers such as Helene Cixous, and which, she says, contrast sharply with the curious "timidity" of the critiques offered by Keller and her followers:

> By focusing on the inevitable struggle, the warring relationship between such hierarchical oppositions [as for example, activity/passivity; culture/nature; head/heart; man/woman...] Cixous at once signals that the battle between the sexes insinuates itself in the very structure of the sign, and that in the case of such binary oppositions the sexual struggle is bound up with the effort to deconstruct phallogocentric logic... The deconstructive move is not to <u>abolish</u> oppositions, or to deny that such signifiers exist, but rather to trace the way in which each signifier contaminates and subverts the meanings of the others. Such an approach <u>opens</u> the sign up, insists that its meaning is always deferred, never fully present to itself. In its questioning of the metaphysics of presence and identity, deconstruction offers a more radical solution to the problem of subject and object raised by Keller and Bordo. (1989: 194)

It is from this point, via a brief look at French feminist philosopher Michele Le Doeuff's account of

knowledge and patriarchal ideologization, that Moi turns towards the Freudian psychoanalytic dialogue. For Moi, the analytical situation radically undermines the split between active subject and passive object denounced by Keller - not only because the doctor here turns listener, but also because the analytical session engages both analyst and patient in transference and countertransference. Transference in analysis is roughly defined by Moi as "the process whereby the patient transfers earlier traumas and reactions, whether real or imaginary, on to the analyst", while countertransference is characterized as "the analyst's more or less unconscious reactions to the discourse of the patient". (1989: 197) For Moi (as for Lacan) the Freudian dialogue, caught as it is in a web of transference and countertransference, "unsettles and undoes any clear-cut oppositions between subject and object, self and other". (1989: 198) Moi turns to Shoshana Felman to draw out the implications of this point:

> By shifting and undercutting the clear-cut polarities between subject and object, self and other, inside and outside, analyst and analysand, consciousness and unconscious, the new Freudian reflexivity substitutes for all binary, symmetrical conceptual oppositions - that is, substitutes for the very foundations of Western metaphysics - a new mode of interfering heterogeneity. The new reflexive mode - instituted by Freud's way of listening to the discourse of the hysteric and which Lacan will call the "inmixture of the subjects" (Ecrits, p. 415) - divides the subjects differently, in such a way that they are neither entirely distinguished, separate from each other, nor, correlatively, entirely totalizable but, rather, interfering from within and in one another. (1989: 198)

There is then in the psychoanalytic situation (concludes Moi) a model of knowledge which offers no firmly established binary opposites, which cannot therefore be gendered either as masculine or feminine, and which thereby offers us a chance to escape the "patriarchal tyranny of thought by sexual analogy": "As feminists in search of new ways to think about objectivity, knowledge, and modes of intellectual activity," Moi writes, "we can ill afford to neglect the model offered by psychoanalysis." (1989: 198)

However - and here's the catch - Moi also points out that if Freud's (and Breuer's) act of listening represents an effort to include the "irrational discourse of femininity" in the realm of science, it also embodies their hope of extending their own rational understanding of psychic phenomena: "Grasping the logic of the unconscious, they want to make it accessible to reason." (1989: 197) In other words, if on the one hand Freud's and Breuer's "act of listening" can be said to constitute a "revolutionary effort to let female madness speak to male science", what lurks behind it at the same time is a "colonizing, rational impulse" which constantly threatens to undermine it, to "obliterate" the language of the irrational and the unconscious, and to repress the challenging presence of the feminine in the process. (1989: 197)

Having once drawn our attention to it, however, Moi dismisses this contradiction at the heart of the psychoanalytic project with a surprising rapidity; but not without first alluding, even if only in passing, to its significance in the case of Dora. In Dora's case, she suggests, Freud allows the "colonizing impulse" to gain the upper hand; here, according to Moi, what she now calls the "imperialist tendency" running right through Freud's writings, surfaces conspicuously.

Indeed, the observation is not an original one. It has been made before, in one form or another, by almost everyone who has written on Dora in recent years, and in almost every one of the essays published in In Dora's Case. To illustrate the point, here are just a few examples:

For Maria Ramas (Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria) such is the obliterating force of Freud's blindness in his treatment of Dora that in the end her hysteria - her "repudiation of sexuality" - is not explained by Freud but, rather, "explained away"; in the course of the analysis, according to Ramas, Freud literally "abandons" his initial concern - the elucidation of (Dora's) hysteria - to present us instead with a series of "ideological constructs" manufactured purely as a defence for his own "patriarchal fantasies of femininity and female sexuality". (1985[1980]: 151)

Particularly striking to Neil Hertz (Dora's Secrets, Freud's Techniques) are Freud's moments of "exuberant intellectual narcissism" in the case; his moments of "investment" in the "beautiful totality" of his own imaginative products; the "vigor" with which he "differentiates" himself from Dora, his own "mode of knowing" from hers. For Hertz, while Freud's "overflowing fondness" for his subject in the Dora case is noteworthy, it can hardly be said to include Dora herself: "if anything, she is diminished by it, seen thoroughly through". (985[1983]: 233-34)

In Steven Marcus' view (Freud and Dora) the distinguishing characteristic of Freud's technique in this case is the aggressive manner in which he "forces interpretations on Dora before she is ready for them or can accept them". (1985[1974]: 88) According to Marcus, throughout this "extraordinary work" both Dora and Freud

insist with "implacable will" upon the primacy of their own versions of "the truth", or "reality", which they then use as "weapons" against one another. It must be emphasized, he remarks,

> that the "reality" Freud insists upon is very different from the "reality" that Dora is claiming and clinging to. And it has to be admitted that not only does Freud overlook for the most part this critical difference; he also adopts no measures for dealing with it. The demon of interpretation has taken hold of him, and it is this power that presides over the case of Dora... In fact, as the case history advances it becomes increasingly clear to the careful reader that Freud and not Dora has become the central character in the action... Instead of letting Dora appropriate her own story, Freud becomes the appropriator of it. (1985[1974]: 85)

The Freud we meet with in Marcus' reading is indeed a "demonic" figure, "pushing on no matter what" - the same "relentless investigator" in fact that we encounter in Toril Moi's 1981 reading of the case, in Representation of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora. Here, Moi had developed to the full her allusion, in the later essay, to Freud's "imperialist tendencies" in Dora's case, while suggesting that his account of the analysis of Dora be scanned "with the utmost suspicion". In the Dora case, she writes, Freud's attempts to posit himself as the neutral, scientific observer who is merely noting down his observations and reflections can no longer be accepted: "The archeologist must be suspected of having mutilated the relics he finds." (1985[1981]: 189) As for Dora herself, her condition as a victim of male dominance becomes starkly visible in Freud's account, according to Moi: "She is not

only a pawn in the game between Herr K. and her father; her doctor joins in the male team and untiringly tries to ascribe to her desires she does not have and to ignore the ones she does have". (1985[1981]: 191) If the "emancipatory project" of psychoanalysis fails in the case of Dora, concludes Moi, without mincing her words,

> it is because Freud the liberator happens also to be, objectively, on the side of oppression. He is a male in patriarchal society, and moreover not just any male but an educated bourgeois male, incarnating malgre lui patriarchal values. His own emancipatory project profoundly conflicts with his political and social role as an oppressor of women. (1985[1981]: 193)

But if it can be held that, in Dora's case, Freud failed in the potentially "revolutionary" project to let the madwoman speak, to inscribe the madwoman's discourse into science; that, in Dora's case, the discourse of the hysteric was allowed only the slightest inroad into the "smooth positivist logic" of the man of science, becoming if anything submerged by it instead; if it can be held that in Dora's case, it is Freud's story that is being written and not hers that is being retold, can it not equally be held that in the storm of critical protest that has arisen in its wake, Dora's story has become no more her own, still less Freud's, but largely, and perhaps even overwhelmingly, that of his critics? Freud's story of Dora's hysteria has become the critics' story of Freud's failure to come to terms with it. It is to salvage what has been lost in the telling of this tale that I would now like to turn once again to the text of Freud's Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria.

II

Why did Freud publish Dora's case at all? If the analysis failed so dismally, and if (as his critics have often conceded) Freud was the first to admit it, what could he have hoped to gain from setting down on record this ignominious personal and professional defeat? The reasons Freud himself offers in the Prefatory Remarks, and comes back to sporadically in The Clinical Picture, are reiterated as follows in the Postscript:

> [I]n publishing this paper, incomplete though it is, I had two objects in view. In the first place, I wished to supplement my book on the interpretation of dreams by showing how an art, which would otherwise be useless, can be turned to account for the discovery of the hidden and repressed parts of mental life... In the second place, I wished to stimulate interest in a whole group of phenomena of which science is still in complete ignorance today because they can only be brought to light by the use of this particular method. No one, I believe, can have had any true conception of the complexity of the psychological events in a case of hysteria - the juxtaposition of the most dissimilar tendencies, the mutual dependence of contrary ideas, the repressions and displacements and so on...

Some lines later, he moves on to the question of sexuality:

> I was further anxious to show that sexuality does not simply intervene, like a deus ex machina, on one single occasion, at some point in the working of the processes which characterize hysteria, but that it provides the motive power for every single symptom, and for every single manifestation of a symptom... I can only repeat over and over again - for I never find it otherwise - that sexuality is the key to the problem of the psychoneuroses and of the neuroses in general. (1905[1901: 155 and 156)

The usual response to Freud's own characterisations of his labours is to dismiss them with the same scepticism he was in the habit of directing at his patients. Thus for Steven Marcus the above remarks have at most a "fractional validity". The real reason behind its publication, he claims, was clearly Freud's own "unsettled and ambiguous role" in the case; his need to write it out, in some measure, as "an effort of self-understanding". (1985[1974: 67) This - in some measure - may well be so; but the critical energy which has been so forcefully directed in recent years, by Freud's feminist critics in particular, at his own "unsettled role" in the case has ended, I would suggest, by obscuring the substantial contribution it represents in the history of the development of Freud's theory as a whole; its crucial place in the building of the very psychoanalytic model of knowledge which, for Moi, holds such promise for feminists in search of new modes of intellectual activity.

It is by now widely known that although the first version of Dora, originally entitled "Dreams and Hysteria", was written in 1901, the year after the appearance of The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud delayed publication until 1905, the year of the Three Essays on Sexuality. Amongst

much speculation over the reasons for this, Jacqueline Rose has suggested that Freud's hesitancy in publishing the case was a measure of his theoretical uncertainty during this period: the period between the first formulations of the theory of the unconscious in The Interpretation of Dreams, and the theory of sexuality in the Three Essays. In this sense, the history of the case, its "hesitancy", she writes, "speaks for itself":

> for [Dora's case] is caught quite literally between those two aspects of Freud's work, the theory of the unconscious and the theory of sexuality, whose relation or distance is what still concerns us today, as if the case of Dora could only appear finally at the point where the implications of its failure had already been displaced onto a theory of sexuality, by no means complete and still highly problematic, but at least acknowledged as such. (1985[1978]: 130)

This marks the beginning of what is probably one of the most constructive analyses to date of the reasons for the case's failure, one in which its transitional theoretical status - falling (or "failing") as it does between Freud's theory of the unconscious and that of sexuality - is for once recognized and taken into account. This, unlike many, is an analysis whose theoretical density takes it beyond any fixation on Freud the man, and his narcissistic "fantasies of omniscience"; while also, in its author's view, going beyond the call for an alternative reading, whose content would then be "the feminine", to recognize the problem of Dora precisely as the problem of the feminine within psychoanalysis "in its urgency for us now".

The history of the case - its original title; the date of its conception and the date of its eventual publication; the space between the two, punctuated, as Rose observes, by Freud's own comments on his hesitancy regarding a case that had promised so much, but had turned out "poorer than [he] could have wished" - would tend to bear out the double theoretical and methodological purpose stated above: to supplement The Interpretation of Dreams, and to demonstrate the importance of sexuality in the aetiology of hysteria. What then of the second objective - "to stimulate interest in a whole group of phenomena of which science is still in complete ignorance today..."; and to give some conception of the complexity of the psychological events in a case of hysteria - "the juxtaposition of the most dissimilar tendencies, the mutual dependence of contrary ideas, the repressions and displacements and so on..."?

This of course, marks the beginnings of precisely that "effort" Moi discerns in Freudian psychoanalysis to "open up and extend the field of rational knowledge" - an effort consisting in its theorisation of the properties of the unconscious - and it is clear that the significance of the case history for Freud lies not least in the introduction it provides to this new terrain. Indeed, at a number of points in the narrative, Freud makes it evident that he feels himself to be on the edge of a new region of knowledge - one which it will nevertheless be impossible to chart completely in the space of a single case history.

The first contours of this new territory are outlined in the opening pages of the first chapter of the case history proper, The Clinical Picture, in Freud's description of his patients' inability, in the early stages of treatment, to provide a coherent narrative of the history of their lives and illnesses. The first account, he tells us, is invariably fragmented and incomplete; comparable, in

fact, to "an unnavigable river whose stream is at one moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among shallows and sandbanks". (1905[1901]: 45) This inability to give an ordered and consistent history, Freud stresses, is not merely characteristic of the neuroses; it also possesses great theoretical significance with regard to both the conscious and unconscious motivations of the patient.

In the first place, he writes, part of what the patient omits from the story will have been kept back consciously and intentionally, for reasons of shame, timidity or discretion: "this is the share taken by conscious disingenuousness". In the second place, what is left out of the story may have been normally available to consciousness, but may have disappeared from memory in the telling, despite the patient's having made no deliberate reservations: "the share taken by unconscious disingenuousness". In the third place, there may by true "amnesias" - "gaps in the memory into which not only old recollections but even quite recent ones have fallen" - and "paramnesias" which are formed secondarily to fill in the gaps and conceal the presence of the amnesias. In addition, even when the events themselves have been kept in mind, the purpose underlying the amnesias may be fulfilled by altering their chronological order, thereby destroying the connections between them. (Freud, 1905[1901]: 46-47)

From a theoretical point of view, the presence of such "amnesias" is fundamental, and a necessary correlate of the symptoms. Ideally (as the theory has it in this early stage of its development) in the further course of the treatment, the patient will supply the facts which had been withheld, or had not come to mind. The paramnesias will prove untenable and the gaps in the patient's memory will be filled in, until finally, all going well, the patient will

come into possession of his or her own full and unbroken history:

> Whereas the practical aim of the treatment is to remove all possible symptoms and to replace them by conscious thoughts, we may regard it as a second and theoretical aim to repair all the damages to the patient's memory. These two aims are coincident. When one is reached, so is the other; and the same path leads to them both. (Freud, 1905[1901]: 47)

Dora's case then, opens by focusing our attention on those very "points of exclusion, repression and blockage in... discursive constructions" whose emphasis in the analytic dialogue Toril Moi invokes as the distinguishing characteristic of psychoanalytic practice, and because of which she advances it as a new - and, for feminists, more promising - model of structuring knowledge. In fact, this early discussion on amnesia marks one of the formative moments in what will later become the Freudian theory of repression; and a continuation of what Freud had first described in the Studies on Hysteria as a "psychical force" (or an "aversion on the part of the ego") in his patients which was opposed to pathogenic ideas becoming conscious or being remembered; a form of "not knowing", which was in fact a "not wanting to know - a not wanting which might be to a greater or lesser extent conscious." (1893-1895: 353) In 1914, Freud declared the theory of repression to be the "corner-stone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests", and in the following year, he published his most elaborate formulation of the theory in the metapsychological paper entitled "Repression" and in Section IV of the paper on "The Unconscious". (see Freud, 1915a and b)

If repression is the "corner-stone" on which the structure of psychoanalysis rests, it also holds potential theoretical value in Moi's search for new ways to think about knowledge and modes of intellectual activity. Loosely speaking, repression may be defined as a psychical mechanism activated when the satisfaction of a drive (or instinct, as Strachey's translation has it), though likely to be pleasurable in itself, would be "irreconcilable with other claims and intentions", and would therefore "cause pleasure in one place and unpleasure in another." If the motive force of unpleasure acquires more strength than the pleasure likely to be obtained from satisfaction, the instinctual impulse may pass into a state of "repression". In the "first phase" of repression, the psychical representative of the instinct is denied entrance into the conscious. In the second phase, "mental derivatives" of the repressed representative - or trains of thought which, while originating elsewhere, have since come into associative connection with it - undergo the same fate as what was primally repressed. (Freud, 1915a: 146)

The most striking feature of Freud's theory as formulated in the paper devoted to repression in 1915 (and the most promising, I would suggest, for the move away from "patriarchal systems of knowledge") is the continuing active force he ascribes to an instinct's psychical (or "ideational") representative <u>even after it has undergone repression</u>. Freud insists that "it is a mistake to emphasize only the repulsion which operates from the direction of the conscious upon what is to be repressed; quite as important is the attraction exercised by what was primally repressed upon everything with which it can establish a connection." In other words, it is essential to realise that repression does not hinder the instinctual representative from continuing to exist in the unconscious; from "organizing itself further, putting out derivatives,

and establishing connections." Indeed, Freud goes on to say, the instinctual representative develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence:

> It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when they are translated and presented to the neurotic are not only bound to seem alien to him, but frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength... (1915a: 148)

We are now coming very close to another of Moi's preferred models for knowledge - that suggested by the French feminist philosopher, Michele Le Doeuff. Le Doeuff's analysis marks the transition, in Moi's paper, from the "somewhat disappointing" critiques of so-called "male science" offered by Keller and her followers, to the more promising one suggested by psychoanalytic practice:

> Focusing [Moi writes] on the double problem of the empirical exclusion of women and the theoretical repression of femininity in western philosophy, Le Doeuff argues that traditional western philosophy exhibits a striking contradiction at its centre. On the one hand, philosophy is an activity based on the recognition of lack: philosophy, in other words, exists because there is something that remains to be thought. On the other hand, philosophy also works from the imaginary assumption that the knowledge produced by philosophy creates completion, that its aim is to construct a flawless structure without lack. The paradoxical truth is that, for this school of thought,

> perfect philosophy would simply cease to be philosophy at all. (1989: 194)

The problem for feminists is that invariably, western philosophy posits woman as the symbol of lack and negativity, thereby, the argument goes, turning her into the ground of its own existence: "by her very inferiority she guarantees the superiority of philosophy." (Moi, 1989: 195) Moi supports Le Doeuff's call for an alternative philosophy which would be conscious of its own lack, which, "aware of its own open and unfinished nature can hope to avoid being caught in the sterile dichotomy between reason and unreason, masculinity and femininity." (1989: 196) For Moi, the advantage of Le Doeuff's account (over that of Keller, Bordo et al.) is that it "allows us to analyse and deconstruct the opposition between inside and outside which structures knowledge itself. In this respect, Le Doeuff's deconstruction of the boundaries between knowledge and non-knowledge is not only reminiscent of Derrida, but of the very specific dialogic situation created by psychoanalytic practice." (1989: 195)

The same might be said of Freud's theory of repression: In its emphasis on the "deceptive (psychical) strength" of the subject's repressed instinct - or "amnesia" - normally considered as a form of <u>loss</u> of knowledge, but which is now shown to be more powerful in its influence over the subject than what he or she <u>knows</u>, or has available to consciousness, Freud's theory of repression - in its first evolutionary stages in Dora's case, and central to psychoanalytic practice in general - provides just such a "deconstruction of the boundaries between knowledge and non-knowledge", perhaps in fact the first radical questioning of the metaphysics of presence and identity which must be the starting point of all deconstructive logic, and, ultimately,

all movements away from those systems of knowledge trapped in Moi's "straitjacket of patriarchal binary thought".

In Dora's case, there seems to be little dispute over the basic theory underlying it that hysterical symptoms are "compromise formations" that express repressed sexual wishes; nor over the fact that, since Dora does indeed display such hysterical symptoms, she must have a "secret" - an unconscious desire. The controversy, and most of the opposition from feminists, arises not in relation to the existence of Dora's "amnesias", but to the anamnesis through which we are conducted in the psychoanalytic narrative which tells of her treatment, during the course of which, it is held, Dora's story becomes Freud's. For Moi, this anamnesis is coincident with the point at which Freud's "imperialist tendency" surfaces in the case, thereby all but obliterating the discourse of his patient.

Since the "language of the irrational and the unconscious", or the "discourse of the madwoman", as Moi has it, is by definition unavailable to consciousness, then it must be in the process of "translating" it into conscious thought-language, that this "obliteration" takes place. And if repression is the process through which the patients' "intimate" and "secret" wishes are made unavailable to consciousness in the first place - through which they are converted into the symptoms of hysteria - then the dream, according to Freud, is one of the roads along which consciousness can be reached by the psychical material which has been cut off from it, and become pathogenic; it is one of the "detours by which repression can be evaded..." (1905[1901]: 44). Freud's interpretations of Dora's dreams have been much discussed, while frequently held as evidence of his tendency in Dora's case to substitute his own version of reality for hers. In the following section, I would like to put Moi's charge against Freud to the test, this time by

tracing his "translation into conscious thought-language" not of her dreams but of another of her "indirect" psychical representations - of what he calls her "supervalent" train of thought regarding her father's relations with Frau K.

III

In his 1915 paper on "repression", Freud emphasizes that it would be incorrect to imagine that all the derivatives of what was primally repressed are withheld from the conscious by the mechanism of repression. If these derivatives become sufficiently far removed from the repressed representative, he suggests - "whether owing to the adoption of distortions or by reason of the number of intermediate links inserted" - they have free access to the conscious. (1915a: 149) This is significant since the appearance of such "derivatives", produced by the patient during analysis in the form of "associations", may lead the analyst to the content of the repressed material. Thus Freud writes,

> "In carrying out the technique of psychoanalysis, we continually require the patient to produce such derivatives of the repressed as, in consequence either of their remoteness or of their distortion, can pass the censorship of the conscious. Indeed, the associations which we require him to give without being influenced by any conscious purposive idea and without any criticism, and from which we reconstitute a conscious translation of the repressed representative - these associations are nothing else than remote and distorted derivatives of this kind. (1915a: 149)

If the condition for such derivatives gaining access to consciousness is a function of their remoteness (through distortion) from the repressed representative, then their initial formation is a function of the existence of a "continuous pressure" exercised by the repressed itself in the direction of the conscious, so that if the repression is to be kept from breaking through to consciousness, this pressure must be balanced by an unceasing counter-pressure: "Thus the maintenance of a repression involves an uninterrupted expenditure of force, while its removal results in a saving from an economic point of view." (1915a: 151)

In Chapter IV of his 1915 paper on "The Unconscious" Freud describes this process - the process whereby the repression is not only established but continued and maintained - as an anticathexis "by means of which the system Pcs. protects itself from the pressure upon it of the unconscious idea." It is this which represents the permanent expenditure of energy of a primal repression; and which also guarantees the permanence of that repression: "Anticathexis is the sole mechanism of primal repression; in the case of repression proper ('after-pressure') there is in addition withdrawal of the Pcs. cathexis. It is very possible that it is precisely the cathexis which is withdrawn from the idea that is used for anticathexis." (1915b: 184)

The notion of "anticathexis" is prefigured in Freud's analysis of the unconscious force underlying Dora's reaction to her father's affair with Frau K. According to Freud, Dora herself complained that she could not account for its apparently disproportionate strength:

> 'I can think of nothing else', she complained again and again. 'I know my brother says we children have no right to criticize this behaviour of Father's. He declares that we ought not to trouble ourselves about it, and ought even to be glad, perhaps, that he has found a woman he can love, since Mother understands him so little. I can quite see that, and I should like to think the same as my brother, but I can't. I can't forgive him for it.' (1905[1901]: 88-89)

Dora's inability in the face of her own repeated attempts to dissipate or remove this particular train of thought leads Freud to suspect the presence of a pathological component: "A train of thought such as this," he writes, "may be described as excessively intense, or better reinforced, or 'supervalent'... It shows its pathological character in spite of its apparently reasonable content, by the single peculiarity that no amount of conscious and voluntary effort of thought on the patient's part is able to dissipate or remove it. A normal train of thought, however intense it may be, can eventually be disposed of." (1905[1901]: 88) Freud concludes that such a thought must owe its reinforcement to the unconscious: "It cannot be resolved by any effort of thought, either because it itself reaches with its root down into unconscious, repressed material, or because another unconscious thought lies concealed behind it." (1905[1901]: 89)

In the latter case, Freud goes on, the concealed thought is usually the direct contrary of the supervalent one: "Contrary thoughts are always closely connected with each other and are often paired off in such a way that the one thought is excessively intensely conscious while its counterpart is repressed and unconscious." This relation

between the two thoughts is proffered as an effect of the process of repression, in which repression is in fact achieved by means of the excessive reinforcement of the thought contrary to the one to be repressed. The "reactive thought" keeps the objectionable one under repression by means of a certain "surplus of intensity"; at the same time it itself becomes "damped" and proof against conscious effort of thought. In this scenario, conscious thought itself becomes a symptom of the repressed, and the task of the analyst to strip the supervalent thought of its excessive intensity by bringing its repressed contrary into consciousness.

Freud's response to this particular point of "exclusion" or "blockage" in Dora's discourse is given in two essentially contradictory narratives, each of which (following the above formulation) serves as an attempt to identify and give substance to the "repressed contrary" to which the supervalent thought owes its existence, and the second of which significantly displaces the first.

Following what most critics have identified as the general scheme of Freud's interpretation of the case as a whole, the first scenario is based on what Rose describes as a "simple identification of the oedipal triangle". The starting point for this is Dora's protest at her place in the relationship between Frau K. and her father; that is, her objection to being "proferred as a pawn" to Herr K. Her repudiation of Herr K. is then the inevitable consequence of an outrage that takes Herr K. as its immediate object, and yet behind which is the figure of the father, who is the object of real reproach. (see Rose, 1985[1978]: 132)

Specifically, at this point in the narrative, the obsessive character of Dora's preoccupation with her father's relations to Frau K. - along with her "ultimatum"

to him ("either her or me..."), her "scenes", her suicidal intentions - is taken to constitute a form of behaviour which, exceeding filial concern, would be more appropriate in a "jealous wife" and must therefore signify her newly revived (unconscious) sexual attraction to her father, now manifested in an (unconscious) identification with "both the woman her father had once loved and the woman he loved now". This, in turn, is diagnosed as a "reactive symptom" to cover the suppression of her love for Herr K:

> I could not avoid the assumption that she was still in love with him, but that, for unknown reasons, since the scene by the lake her love had aroused in her violent feelings of opposition, and that the girl had brought forward and reinforced her old affection for her father in order to avoid any further necessity for paying attention to the love which she had felt in the first years of her girlhood and which had now become distressing to her. In this way I gained an insight into a conflict which was well calculated to unhinge the girl's mind. On the one hand she was filled with regret at having rejected the man's proposal, and with longing for his company and all the little signs of his affection; while on the other these feelings of tenderness and longing wer combated by powerful forces, amongst which her pride was one of the most obvious. Thus she had succeeded in persuading herself that she had done with Herr K. - that was the advantage she derived from this typical process of repression; and yet she was obliged to summon up her infantile affection for her father and to exaggerate it, in order to protect herself against the feelings of love which were constantly pressing forward into consciousness. (1905[1901]: 93)

As in Freud's analysis of Dora's second dream (see Rose, 1985[1978]: 132) Dora's infantile love for her father is here summoned up secondarily, as a defense against her continuing love for Herr K. In this scenario, then - and in Freud's general intepretation of the case as a whole - Dora's rejection of Herr K. is defined as simultaneously oedipal and hysterical (repudiation of her own desire); and her desire itself as unproblematic - heterosexual and genital.

But if this is the point at which Freud's interpretation can be seen to endorse a patriarchal definition of Dora's desire, it is also the point at which the narrative which contains it strains most insistently against such an endorsement. For if the above scenario provides a motivation for the revival of Dora's infantile affection for her father, it nevertheless fails (as Freud himself implies) to account for the fact that she was almost incessantly a prey to "the most embittered jealousy". (1905[1901]: 93) Neither does it explain Dora's earlier prolonged period of complicity in the affair between her father and Frau K., nor her persistent loyalty to the woman who had ostensibly replaced her in her father's affections. Furthermore, it cannot account for Dora's "unmistakable identification with her father", revealed in the symptom of the cough, nor her further "masculine identifications" at various points in the case history. (see Rose, 1985[1978]: 133)

Most crucial of all, however, the first scenario cannot explain the "obstinacy" with which Dora retained the particular amnesia concerning the sources of her "forbidden" knowledge - the knowledge whose main source, as Freud realizes only too late, "could have been no one but Frau K.", and which Frau K. will later use to betray her. And it

is Freud's refusal to let go of this most "remarkable" of Dora's blockages and repressions - ("her knowing all about such things and, at the same time, her always pretending not to know where her knowledge came from...") - which prompts him finally to resist the temptation to settle for less when he offers in the concluding pages of The Clinical Picture to "obscure and efface" what he now revealingly refers to as the "fine poetic conflict" it has thus far been possible to ascribe to Dora. The second scenario which Freud now puts forward in its place - and which he describes as a "complication" of the first, but which in fact crucially displaces it - reveals Frau K rather than her husband as the real object of Dora's desire and obsessive jealousy, and the reason for her exaggerated reproaches against her father. Although what Freud now perceives as the "strong homosexual current" in Dora's mental life becomes submerged again in his analysis of Dora's dreams, the deep significance he attached to its discovery - however belated - is stressed in a lengthy footnote to his closing remarks on the case.

Thus the anamnesis through which we are conducted in this sequence - the product of Freud's attempt to "fill the gaps" in Dora's memory - appears in two contradictory narratives, each with its own central character. In the first, the protagonist, and the object of Dora's repressed desire, is Herr K.; in the second, it is his wife. It is the persistence with which Freud clings to the first of these two narratives, while marginalising the second, that has attracted most hostility, particularly from feminists. What is emphasized in the response is first, that the "reality" Freud insists upon here is very different from the "reality" Dora is claiming and clinging to; and second, that not only has Freud assigned Herr K. a far more favourable position than he deserved in Dora's mental life, in doing so he has at the same time - in his identification with Herr K., and in his failure to recognize the counter-transference

(the place of his own desire in the narrative) - made himself rather than Dora the central character in the action.

There is no denying that Freud underplays, or is perhaps simply blind to the extent to which his second tale - the tale of Dora's homosexual desire for Frau K. - contradicts and undermines the first; his only offer to deal with this problem appearing in what Rose perceives as a "mandatory appeal" to the properties of the unconscious itself ("in the unconscious contradictory thoughts live very comfortably side by side" (1905[1901]: 96)). Rose notes the tenacity with which Freud hangs on to a notion of a genital heterosexuality throughout the case - so much so that in consequence, he is led to pursue a number of blatantly false trails in his interpretation of both her dreams:

> Note for the moment that Freud is so keen to hang on to a notion of genital heterosexuality that it leads him, first, to identify the fantasy of childbirth that analysis revealed behind the second dream as an "obscure maternal longing", outdoing in advance Karen Horney's appeals to such a longing as natural, biological and pregiven, in her attacks on Freud's later work on femininity, and second, to classify Dora's masculine identification and desire for Frau K. as "gynaecophilic" and to make it "typical of the unconscious erotic life of hysterical girls", that is, to use as an explanation of hysteria the very factor that needs to be explained. (1985[1978]: 134)

Yet Freud's apparent failure to grasp the full significance of his move should not be allowed to undermine it, nor to efface the brief but telling comparison inscribed

within it between his vision of himself as "man of letters" in the first tale while "medical man" in the second; creator of a "fine poetic conflict" in the first scenario and a "world of reality" in the second. Nor finally, should the theoretical distance be underestimated, and thus the radical break it represents, between the notion of a problematic, differential and component sexuality suggested, however tentatively, by Freud's second narrative - and elaborated in his Three Essays on Sexuality - and the nineteenth-century medical conceptualization of the sexual instinct from within which it was produced.

For Rose, Freud's unconvincing attempt to resolve the contradictions he himself has created reveals a theory of interpretation functioning as "resistance" to the pressing need to develop a theory of sexuality - whose "complexity" and "difficulty", as she points out, manifests itself time and again in the case. But what is not mentioned here is the already existent, and indeed powerfully institutionalised, theory of sexuality from within which Freud was working at the time. Freud's "resistance", according to Rose, appears most strongly in relation to Frau K.'s status as an object of desire for Dora: "Thus this aspect of the case surfaces only symptomatically in the text, at the end of the clinical picture that it closes, and in a series of footnotes and additions to the interpretation of the second dream and in the postscript." (1985[1978]: 134) Read against the conceptual and historical background of nineteenth century psychiatry, however, the marginal status of this aspect of the case becomes symptomatic, I would suggest, not so much of Freud's resistance as that of the psychiatry of the day; of the absence of any conceptual backing for an analysis of Dora's homosexuality which could assign it a central position in the narrative without converting the story of her hysteria into a tale of perversion instead...

Following Arnold Davidson's account (1987) of the historical background against which Freud wrote his Three Essays on Sexuality (and thus Dora's case history too), we learn that in nineteenth century psychiatiric circles there is virtually unargued unanimity both on the fact that the "sexual instinct" has a natural function and on what that function is. Krafft-Ebing's view is given as representative:

> During the time of the maturation of physiological processes in the reproductive glands, desires arise in the consciousness of the individual, which have for their purpose the perpetuation of the species (sexual instinct)...
>
> With opportunity for the natural satisfaction of the sexual instinct, every expression of it that does not correspond with the purpose of nature - ie., propagation - must be regarded as perverse. (1987: 260)

Should anyone doubt the representativeness of Krafft-Ebing's conception, Davidson cites a long passage from Moll's Perversions of the Sex Instinct (1891) (since Moll is considered to be a direct anticipator of Freud) which demonstrates that Moll's conception of the nature of the sexual instinct and Krafft-Ebing's are quite literally interchangeable. "Nineteenth-century psychiatry silently adopted this conception of the function of the sexual instinct. It was often taken as so natural as not to need explicit statement..." writes Davidson. (1987: 261) "In fact," he adds later, "many writers before Freud used the terms 'sexual instinct' and 'genital instinct'

interchangeably, as if the latter were simply a more precise name for the former. This identification was not in the least bit arbitrary, since the sexual instinct was conceived of as psychically expressing itself in an attraction for members of the opposite sex, with genital intercourse as the ultimate aim of this attraction." (1987: 273) Since the natural function of the sexual instinct was thus taken to be propagation, and the corresponding natural, psychological satisfaction of this instinct to consist in the satisfaction derived from heterosexual, genital intercourse, then any deviation from this function, including homosexuality, was taken to be a perversion.

Juliet Mitchell has warned against the dangers of extrapolating Freud's ideas about femininity from their context within the larger theories of psychoanalysis - a practice which, she suggests, can be held responsible for much of the hostility his work has provoked amongst feminists. For, as Mitchell points out, it is only this context which prevents such notorious concepts as for example, "penis-envy", from becoming either laughable or ideologically dangerous: "In the briefest possible terms, we could say that psychoanalysis is about the material reality of ideas both within, and of, man's history; thus in 'penis-envy' we are talking not about an anatomical organ, but about the ideas of it that people hold and live by within the general culture, the order of human society." (1974: xvi) The same hostility must naturally result from any attempt to read Freud without constantly bearing in mind both the conceptual framework in which he was working, and the ideological and social order in which he lived.

Further, while it is one thing to pay lip-service to the question of history, it is another to integrate it into the practice of interpretation itself. There are, of course, many patriarchal judgements to be found within

Freud's work, and the opportunity to point them out is seldom passed by - particularly, and no doubt understandably, where his feminist critics are concerned. Not infrequently, the link between these judgements and the prejudices of Victorian society is also both recognized and made explicit. Yet, more often than not, if the question of history is not being raised purely as a way of rejecting psychoanalysis as the "culture-bound product of a small-minded 'Victorian' patriarch", it is raised only to accuse Freud of having had a part in it at all - as if his complicity with the ideology of his day were something he might easily have avoided - while what is ignored is the explanatory potential of history with respect to the processes of intellectual production, both for Freud and in general. Thus we can now turn again to Moi, in her essay on Dora:

> Now if the hysterical woman is gagged and chained, Freud posits himself as her liberator. And if the emancipatory project of psychoanalysis fails in the case of Dora, it is because Freud the liberator happens also to be, objectively, on the side of oppression. He is a male in patriarchal society, and moreover not just any male but an educated bourgeois male, incarnating malgre lui patriarchal values. His own emancipatory project profoundly conflicts with his political and social role as an oppressor of women. (1985[1981]: 193)

This is eloquently put, but it is insensitive - as, I would suggest, is the essay as a whole - to the complexity of the charge it lays. For if the "conflict" that it raises is essentially an historical one, and if behind it, in the final analysis, lies the reason for the case's failure, then

why is this the single occasion in the space of Moi's discussion that the category of history is allowed to surface at all? Also, if Freud is an "incarnation" (malgre lui) of patriarchal values, then what, in this equation, we can only wonder, is the content, for Moi, of lui? Important though it is to distinguish and bring to light the moments at which, bourgeois patriarchal male that he was, Freud reproduced the values of his bourgeois patriarchal society, these should not be allowed to obscure those other moments when, malgre lui, he moved decisively, irreversibly, beyond them.

IV

What has been lost in most recent commentary on Freud's Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria is any abiding sense or acknowledgement of its ground-breaking significance in the history of psychoanalytic thought. Read in conjunction with the Studies on Hysteria, The Interpretation of Dreams and the Three Essays on Sexuality (as Freud explicitly intended it to be) Dora's case can be seen to straddle three of the founding moments of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. How then can the case at the same time be said to represent its failure? Would it not be more accurate to suggest that Dora's case, rather than representing the failure of psychoanalytic theory - "in its inability to account for the feminine" - represents the point at which that theory begins; the first significant attempt, in fact, to "write the history of femininity, to understand female subjectivity, or simply to imagine woman as mythical and social subject." (De Lauretis, 1984: 131) Rather than the moment at which Freud's "colonizing impulse... gains the upper hand", Dora's case represents the

moment at which that "colonizing impulse" is first relaxed, however tentatively or incompletely; the moment at which the "language of the irrational and the unconscious" makes its first, tremulous appearance in the discourse of science.

It is ironic that the very "drive for knowledge" (Freud's own theory, in fact, of epistomephilia) which Moi holds responsible for Freud's failure in the Dora case (see Moi, 1985[1981]) is also the theory she invokes in her later essay as most promising for feminism in the directions it offers for a departure from the "dualisms" of patriarchal thought. In particular, Moi claims, since the Freudian drive for knowledge, or the capacity for intellectual speculation, takes the human body as its point of departure, the theory of epistemophilia can be seen to provide us with a first outline of a theory of knowledge which undoes and displaces the reason/emotion (or head/heart; mind/body) dualism which is invariably read through the male/female paradigm. (For elaboration, see Moi, 1989: 198-203) The theory is further valuable, in Moi's view, for its demonstration of the imaginary nature of (male) philosophy's "dream of self-contained plenitude":

> Self-defeating, always frustrated by the limitations of the body, the Freudian drive for knowledge is structurally incapable of achieving total insight or perfect mastery: the philosopher's dream of self-contained plenitude is here unmasked as the imaginary fantasy it is. Freudian theory posits the drive for knowledge (epistemophilia) as crucially bound to the body and sexuality. If reason is always already shot through with the energy of the drives, the body, and desire, to be intellectual can no longer be theorized simply as the "opposite" of being emotional or passionate...(1989: 203)

Thus Moi invokes the theory of epistemophilia as the rationale behind her own conviction that a new feminist philosophy of science has much to gain from Freud and Lacan. Curiously, however, her own criticism of Freud would seem to demand of him the very achievement of "complete elucidation", "total insight" or "perfect mastery" whose impossibility she would now seek to endorse. The same might be said of much recent criticism of Freud's account of the Dora case. Yet it is only if we take an interpretive stance which insists on seeing the <u>whole</u> of psychoanalytic theory as present in one piece of writing - in effect ignoring the historicity of intellectual production in general - that we can easily make such demands.

In this essay, I have tried to do two things: First, to restore some sense of the theoretical moment represented by the Dora case, particularly in its anticipation of later formulations of the crucially significant theory of repression, and in its movement - however halting - towards a new theory of a problematic, differential and component sexuality. Second, I have tried to re-introduce the question of history into what has become the critics' story of Freud's failure to get to the bottom of Dora's case. In doing so, I hope to have suggested a way beyond the contradiction in which Freud is persistently invoked, in feminist criticism, as both liberator and oppressor, hero and villain. The distinction drawn by Mitchell between Freud's <u>theory</u> itself, and the ideological uses to which it is put (1974: xxii) seems especially pertinent here. As Mitchell points out, psychoanalysis, like any other system of thought, was formed and developed within a particular time and place: "but that does not invalidate its claim to universal laws, it only means that these laws have to be extracted from their specific problematic - the particular material conditions of their formation. In this connection

we need to know of the historical circumstances of their development mainly in order not to limit them thereto." (1974: xx)

The difference between ignoring the historical circumstances of the production of Dora's case history, and incorporating them in the process of its interpretation, I would suggest, amounts to the difference between reading it as the moment at which the "emancipatory project" of psychoanalysis fails, and the moment at which it in fact begins.

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CHAPTER FOUR

MOLL FLANDERS AND THE IMPOTENCE OF CRITICISM

> Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity... Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem - those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply - you are yourselves the problem.
>
> Sigmund Freud, 1933

Still one of the most memorable instances of Freud's life-long battle to solve the "riddle of femininity" is his Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (1905) - his account of the case of "Dora", a young woman more or less forced into analysis with him by her father. The case has become most famous not for its successes but for its failures. By now, most contemporary readers, especially those familiar with Dora's subsequent history, have agreed that Freud failed either to get to the bottom of her hysteria - leaving many questions posed by the case unanswered - or to bring about any lasting alleviation of her symptoms, whether mental or physical. In recent years, critics have concentrated on analyzing this failure in terms of Freud's personal part in it. Had he been more aware of such psychoanalytic phenomena as the transference or counter-transference,[1] they argue, Freud might have had more success with the treatment as a whole, and Dora might not have "walked out on it" prematurely as she did, only three months after it had begun.

The case has been especially interesting to Freud's feminist critics, both those generally hostile to his work and those in favour of it. For many feminists, Freud's "technical" and "theoretical" failures in the case are overlaid by what they see as the imposition of his own patriarchal values and prejudices in his interpretations of Dora's symptoms. Freud is "authoritarian", they claim - a "willing participant in the male power game" between Dora's father and his mistress' husband - and at no time does he turn to consider Dora's own experience of the events: "That Freud's analysis fails because of its inherent sexism is the common feminist conclusion," writes Toril Moi. (1985[1981]: 182) One or two critics, most notably Jacqueline Rose, have begun to displace the question of Freud's failure in the case to a more complex consideration of the construction of the "riddle of the nature of femininity" itself. (see Rose, 1985[1978]) From within what <u>already existing</u> inscriptions of "the feminine" was the riddle constructed in the first place? they ask. Who posed it anyway? Today, nearly a century after the publication of Dora's case, the controversy in psychoanalytic circles over the question of femininity continues - so much so that commentator David Macey has been prompted to declare a stalemate, and to pronounce the "obscure object" of psychoanalysis a myth of its own making:

> Freud wishes to see into femininity, to penetrate it. Yet 'lynx-eyed Freud' remains blind to the fact that his phallic-optical metaphors construct and reproduce femininity as dark, impenetrable and unknowable. Psychoanalysis posits femininity as being in excess of its rationalist discourse, and then complains and exclaims that it cannot explain it. It is as though the obscure object had to remain impenetrable for the desire to penetrate to be sustained. Freud's attempts

> to explain femininity might be described as an interminable exercise in epistemological foreplay; the final penetrating explanation or insight never comes, precisely because he defines its object as impenetrably obscure. (1988: 179)

In this essay, I want to examine a different permutation of the age-old quest to solve the riddle of femininity. The relation I will be concerned with here, however, is not that between analyst and analysand, but between the institution of English literary criticism and one of fiction's most controversial female protagonists: Daniel Defoe's notoriously "contradictory", "immoral", "shallow", "hypocritical", "heartless", "bad", yet "marvellous" Moll Flanders. The characterization is Arnold Kettle's, from his 1964 essay, In Defence of Moll Flanders (see Kettle, 1973[1964]), and its concentration on the confused morality of Defoe's heroine has been a representative feature of most readings of Moll Flanders from the moment of its troubled incorporation into the canon. Indeed, literary critics' attempts to "explain" Moll could be said to mirror the "interminable exercise in epistemological foreplay" which has characterized Freud's attempt to "explain" femininity - the "final penetrating explanation or insight" never coming in either case. For many critics, Moll's "contradictions" are part and parcel of her identity as a woman; in Kettle's characterization, in fact, Moll emerges as no less than the embodiment of "pure womanhood":

> The underlying tension which gives Moll Flanders its vitality as a work of art can be expressed by a contradiction which is at once simple and complicated. Moll is immoral, shallow, hypocritical, heartless, a

> bad woman: yet Moll is marvellous. Defoe might almost (though he wouldn't have dreamed of it) have subtitled his book 'A Pure Woman'. (1973[1964]: 391)

These sentiments are echoed by the publishers' comment on the back cover of the Penguin edition of the novel according to which so successfully does Moll represent her sex in Defoe's story, that the "irresistible femininity" of the heroine "rises alomst tangibly off the pages". For Ian Watt on the other hand, as a woman, Moll barely makes the grade: Moll has many "feminine traits", he concedes - she has "a keen eye for fine clothes and clean linen", and shows a "wifely concern" for the creature comforts of her males - but these are relatively external and minor matters, Watt continues, and the essence of her character and actions is "essentially masculine". (1987: 113)

While no-one would wish to claim that Defoe intended Moll Flanders as a contribution to debates on femininity, there is nevertheless no getting away from the fact that most commentary on the novel has, at some stage or another, gravitated irresistably towards the figure of its female protagonist. That is, much of the critical debate around the novel has focused insistently on the problematic subjectivity of the heroine herself. Yet Moll remains elusive, the riddle of her fictional identity intact. According to James Joyce, the character of Moll Flanders has literally brought contemporary criticism to its knees: Along with Christian Davies and Roxana, two of Defoe's other heroines, he writes, Moll forms the "trio of female characters" which has reduced contemporary criticism to "stupefied impotence". (1973[1964]: 345)

This essay will be dedicated to examining some of the problems Defoe's novel has posed to a tradition of

patriarchal literary criticism.[2] These problems, I shall argue, are inseparable from questions of representation, female identity and the notion of "femininity" itself - the same questions in fact which proved so intrusive in Freud's narrative of the case of Dora. In the final section of the essay, I shall propose a new perspective through the work of British feminist Denise Riley. In her recent book, Am I that Name?, Riley suggests that the discursive category "women" is neither straightforward nor natural, but is characterized by an "inherent shakiness":

> To put it schematically: 'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; 'women' is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on; 'women' is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation. (Riley, 1988: 1-2)

It is this "shakiness", I shall argue, exemplified in Defoe's novel in the character of Moll Flanders, which has so successfully resisted the classifications of traditional literary criticism.

I

Although today Defoe is the single writer usually taken as the originator of the novel in England, in his own day he

was thought of as a polemicist and controversialist: "a scribbler with more talent than most, perhaps - as Pope allowed - but essentially not different in kind from the other pamphleteers and hacks of his time." (Rogers, 1972: 4) According to Pat Rogers' account of Defoe's critical heritage, it was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that he gradually came to be accepted as a major literary figure, and only in the nineteenth that he was regarded a "great novelist".

For long the best known single account of Defoe, and one whose influence is still apparent today, according to Rogers, was the somewhat negative assessment by the Victorian man of letters Leslie Stephen, in 1868. It is interesting to see how Stephen's negative judgement is simply repeated and endorsed in F.R. Leavis' seminal work on the novel, The Great Tradition. Here, in a notorious footnote, Leavis effectively refuses Defoe entry into the canonical history of the novel. Defoe, he writes,

> was a remarkable writer, but all that need be said about him as a novelist was said by Leslie Stephen in Hours in a Library... He made no pretension to practising the novelists' art, and matters little as an influence. In fact, the only influence that need be noted is that represented by the use made of him in the nineteen-twenties by the practitioners of the fantastic conte (or pseudo-moral fable) with its empty pretence of significance (1948: 10)

Stephen's disappointment in Defoe arises essentially because in two significant ways, Defoe's novels fail to live up to his idea of what constitutes good fiction. The first has to do largely with formal questions, with Defoe as

"craftsman". As far as Stephen is concerned, the novel as a form has to lie somewhere on the border-line between poetry and prose. "Novels," he writes, "should be prose saturated with poetry"; and Defoe, in Stephen's view, was simply not enough of a poet to be a good novelist: "[Defoe] was simply telling a true story and leaving his readers to feel what they pleased... He was simply a narrator of plain facts...The poetical element would have been as much out of place as it would have been in a merchant's ledger." (cited in Rogers, 1972: 175)

Stephen's second complaint - and the most interesting for us here - has to do with Defoe's depiction of character. For Stephen, it is essential that the characters in novels display some "psychological depth" if the novel is to qualify as successful. As far as Stephen is concerned, in Defoe's novels, we are invariably supplied with too many facts and details in connection with the story, while we are not given enough insight into the emotions of the characters. Defoe, he writes, "is generally too anxious to set everything before us in broad daylight; there is too little of the thoughts and emotions which inhabit the twilight of the mind; of those dim half-seen forms which exercise the strongest influence upon the imagination, and are the most tempting subjects for the poet's art." (cited in Rogers, 1972: 171)

To illustrate the point, Stephen turns to the character of Robinson Crusoe, whom he finds particularly disappointing. Although, in one sense, the story of Crusoe is "marvellously like truth", writes Stephen, it is "singularly wanting" as a psychological study. We are not given enough indication, he complains, of the internal struggles that someone in Crusoe's position must necessarily have gone through. Crusoe himself is "all but impossible". Any man living fifteen years by himself on an island would

either have gone mad in real life, or would have sunk into the semi-savage state; but this does not happen to Crusoe. Stephen, then, is troubled by the "significant difference" between what he finds in the fiction and what he believes would have been the reality. Defoe, he claims, gives a "very inadequate picture of the mental torments to which his hero is exposed." He remarks on Defoe's "want of power in describing emotion" as compared with his "amazing power" in describing facts. (see Rogers, 1972: 172-175)

Nearly a century after the first appearance of Stephen's essay, Ian Watt, in The Rise of the Novel, has some very similar things to say about Defoe. The longest chapter in the book is devoted to Moll Flanders, and in it we find a repetition of Stephen's anxieties about Defoe's "want of power in describing emotion" - his inability to depict psychological depth in his portrayal of character. At the same time, Stephen's preoccupation with "poetic value" - or the lack of it - in Defoe's work persists in Watt's evaluations, only now becoming more pronounced, more clearly defined.

According to Watt, Defoe is incapable of writing in a manner which is "emotionally evocative". Watt is bothered by the sparsity in Defoe's work of what he calls "powerful passages focused on human feeling"; there is too much of something else he calls "uninspired filling-in" - and this is one reason why he believes that Defoe's stature as a novelist has been overestimated. All Watt's criticisms of Moll Flanders come down to what he sees as its "central defect", and that is "a lack of serious order or design" - a lack manifested not only structurally (in the development of the story) but also in the "psychological" and "moral" aspects of the work. Thus Stephen's objections to Defoe's poor craftsmanship, and to the psychological superficiality of his characters, are repeated in Watt's assessment, while

at the same time amplified by a new critical dimension, now focused on the moral aspect of the works, and in this case, specifically, of Moll Flanders.

According to Watt, the moral claim for Moll Flanders amounts to the assertion that it teaches a "somewhat narrow kind of ethical lesson - vice must be paid for and crime does not pay." Narrow as it is, this "moral claim" is not even substantiated by the narrative itself, Watt suggests, for the plot "flatly contradicts" Defoe's proposed moral theme. Despite Defoe's promise in the preface that "there is not a wicked action in any part of [Moll Flanders], but is first or last rendered unhappy", in the story itself, far from suffering appropriately for her wickedness, Moll actually appears to prosper as a result of it. In Watt's judgement, this is a contradiction Defoe would have done well to avoid, since the moral which now emerges in consequence is that "honesty may not be the best policy, and that if you want to live in a genteel style, prudent and enterprising crime may prove more effective than plying your needle; you can always settle your spiritual account when the one at the bank has been taken care of." (1987[1957]: 161)

When he moves on to discuss Defoe's portrayal of Moll herself, Watt (as I mentioned earlier) finds that she is not "feminine" enough to be convincing as a character. Further, she lacks psychological depth, in Watt's assessment, not least because we see her not through the eyes of any other characters in the book, but only as she sees herself. "Defoe keeps us informed," writes Watt, "as no other novelist does, of his heroine's holdings in cash and personal effects: he does not bother to make clear her emotional development, or to take stock of her real character." (1987[1957]: 162) And later, "there is no developing personality in Moll to be observed, no moral or

psychological pattern to the loosely strung out network of personal relations." (1987[1957]: 163) Watt is also disappointed that Defoe does not give more serious consideration to the nature of Moll's relationships: We have little insight, he complains, into most of her lovers or children, or whether she loved them, or which she preferred. Finally, her character as a wife, suggests Watt, is inconsistent with her portrayal as a mother, which is itself contradictory.

Watt's essay is seen as the initiator of a long-standing critical debate over the book's structural coherence - or lack of it - on the one hand, and its alleged "moral inconsistencies" on the other. These "moral inconsistencies" are generally attributed to the character of Moll herself, the problem arising in what John Richetti has described as the "contradiction beween the sordid facts of her story and the attractive vitality of her personality." (1975: 94) Most attempts to explain this contradiction have been focused on the question of Defoe's irony, on whether to take Moll's inconsistencies as a reflection of Defoe's own unresolved and unconscious moral conflicts, or whether to attribute them instead to his use of a consciously ironic mode.[3] One influential critic has tried to account for the problem by attempting to demonstrate the way in which what he calls the "novelistic process" of Moll Flanders continually distracts the reader from the "moral implications" of Moll's various acts: "We may recoil momentarily from [Moll's] heartlessness," he writes, "but so does she, with disarming humanity: once again, in a manner typical of the entire book, Defoe portrays Moll as both reprehensible and sympathetic." (Starr, 1971: 164)

For Ian Watt and Leslie Stephen, on the other hand, the problem of Moll's inconsistencies is more a problem of

Defoe's technical deficiencies as a novelist - his inability to portray psychological or emotional depth. But however we define the parameters of the debate, and however earnest the critics' attempts to conclude with respect to Moll herself - for one she is "guilty of all sorts of shocking actions", while essentially a good woman because "neither a hypocrite or a fool" (Forster, 1973[1927]: 343); for another she is "the embodiment of thrift, good management, and industry" while also "the perverse and savagely acquisitive outlaw, the once dedicated servant of the Lord turned to the false worship of wealth, power, success" (Price, 1973[1964]: 377); for one "essentially masculine" (Watt, 1987[1957]: 113); while for another (by association at least) "a pure woman" (Kettle, 1973[1964]: 191) - whatever the permutations put forward to account for Moll's contradictions, there is no doubting that her fictional identity has in some way posed a challenge to, or resisted, the usual categories of traditional literary criticism. The question that remains now is why.

II

For some critics, Moll's contradictions have rendered her if anything more rather than less convincing as a character - a judgement which necessarily goes hand in hand with a departure from the Leavisite view of Defoe as technically incompetent as a novelist lacking the qualification even to be worthy of consideration. One of the first to give full acknowledgement to Defoe's technical expertise was Leslie Stephen's daughter, Virginia Woolf, in 1919. Expressing her regret, in an essay on the bi-centenary of Robinson Crusoe, that Defoe's other works, including Roxana, Captain Singleton and Colonel Jack, were

so little known, Woolf comes out with an assessment of Defoe's work in general as "indisputably great":

> We may agree with Mr Wright, the biographer of Defoe, that these "are not works for the drawing-room table." But unless we consent to make that useful piece of furniture the final arbiter of taste, we must deplore the fact that their superficial coarseness, or the universal celebrity of Robinsons Crusoe, has led them to be far less widely famed than they deserve... They stand among the few English novels which we can call indisputably great. (1973[1919]: 338)

Many critics have looked back on Virginia Woolf's essay as a peculiarly important moment in the history of Defoe's critical reception, mainly, I think, because of her wholehearted acceptance of Defoe as a serious novelist. In Rogers' assessment, Woolf's essay was "probably the single most influential item" in the entire critical heritage. With it came the recognition that Defoe "repaid adult and sensitive reading": "[Mrs. Woolf] had opened the way to criticism of a more inward and more self-conscious kind than that which had prevailed hitherto." (1972: 26) Also significant, however, was the influence of Woolf's feminism - the new and unprecedented emphasis she gave to the novel's attention to the position of women in eighteenth century Britain. Thus one feminist critic has referred to Woolf's "groundbreaking" observation that Defoe used his heroines to bring to light the "peculiar hardships of women" in eighteenth century Britain - an aspect of the novel which had gone altogether unacknowledged by previous critics, including Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen.

As far as the character of Moll is concerned, Woolf was the first to stress that Moll's "rule of thumb morality" - a code of behaviour which she had "forged in her own head" - was a result not of moral weakness or even confusion, but of necessity, of the fact that from her birth, Moll had been a victim of "that worst of devils, poverty"; that she was driven from place to place throughout her life, forced to shift for herself from an early age, and to earn her living as soon as she could sew; that she had little time to waste, as Woolf put it, "upon the refinements of personal affection." (1973[191]: 339)

So Woolf emerged with an interpretation that began, for the first time, to draw attention away from "essentialist" debates over Moll's innate or inherent moral and psychological make-up to the environment of social inequality in which it was forged, the fictional struggle for survival of which it was an inevitable consequence. Of course any shift in critical focus away from questions of individual morality towards questions of the social - towards a view of subjectivity as <u>socially</u> and <u>culturally</u> contingent rather than given - is a progressive one for feminism,[4] and it is therefore to Defoe's feminist critics that Woolf speaks most strongly.

Woolf's tentative steps towards emphasizing Defoe's social criticism in defence of Moll's so-called "rule of thumb morality" are more fully developed in Lois Chaber's paper on women and capital in <u>Moll Flanders</u> (1982). Chaber writes in opposition to traditional critics such as Terence Martin whose interpretations focus on Moll's psychological characteristics, usually at her expense. Thus where Martin reads Moll's escape through London streets after her first theft - a breathless flight through a maze of backstreets - as an objective correlative for Moll's "confused psychology", Chaber is quick to point out that these

literally tortuous streets exemplify what Raymond Williams calls (in The Country and the City) the "forced labyrinths and alleys of the poor." As an emblem for the whole novel, then, suggests Chaber, they more appropriately evoke the "twisted course laid for Moll in an unjust society." (1982: 212)

Similarly, where Moll's constant hiding of money from husbands or lovers has been attributed (by traditional patriarchal critics) to her "innate criminality", or at best her "middle-class pettiness", Chaber reads it as Moll's only available while ironically fragile means of defence against the legalized theft of women's property rights. (1982: 216) At another point, where Moll's expressed admiration, in the early pages of the novel, for the woman who apparently makes a living mending lace but in fact works as a prostitute, has been interpreted as an ironic revelation of Moll's "real" aspirations, Chaber reads it, somewhat sardonically, as a bit of black humour attacking a society in which sex is the only self-supporting profession for women. (1982: 220)

In Chaber's view, Martin typifies what she scathingly refers to as "those well-meaning participants in the great debate over irony in Moll Flanders who seek to elevate the quality of Defoe's novel by deflating the moral status of its heroine." (In other words, if Moll can be shown conclusively to be inherently immoral, then Defoe can no longer be accused of inconsistency with regard to the moral claims he makes for the novel) While she is sympathetic to their respect for Defoe's art, Chaber takes issue with their designation of his satirical target. His social criticism, she suggests, has been converted too often into psychological comedy: Far from being the constituents of comedy, however, Chaber suggests that "[t]he heroine's allegedly indelicate, immoral and illegal activities are [in fact] emanations and illuminations of a burgeoning

patriarchal capitalist community - or anticommunity - the novel's main object of concern." (1982: 212)

So while Martin reads Moll Flanders as psychological comedy, Chaber, from her Marxist/feminist perspective, reads the novel as social criticism. And the consequences, in their different interpretations of the psyche of the fictional Moll, are significant: Chaber looks at Moll as a social being; following in the footsteps of the great Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, she concentrates her attention on what Lukacs described as the "organic, indissoluble connection between [woman] as a private individual and [woman] as a social being, as a member of a community." According to Chaber, Moll is to be read as a "meeting-point of the forces of change": "The social setting of Moll Flanders," she writes, "is a classic instance of one of Marx's 'periods of transformation', in which the 'material forms of production in society come in conflict with the existing property relations of production', and the heroine, with her bourgeois enterprise on the one hand and her desire for a genteel spouse on the other, embodies historically conflicting classes." (1982: 212)[5]

Other Marxist critics have also attempted, like Chaber, to shift judgement from Moll's "soul" - from her inherent morality or immorality - to the environment in which she struggles to survive. (see, for example, Kettle, 1973[1964]) But in Chaber's view, though they concede the significance of Moll's gender in Defoe's social commentary, they do not go far enough in analyzing his choice of a woman to reflect the bourgeois landscape. For Chaber, Defoe's critique of capitalism is inseparable from his critique of sexism: "Defoe uses Moll's roles as criminal and woman - both outsiders - to criticize emergent capitalism, but in so doing he also reveals the more long-standing evils of sexism... He exposes the worst evils of capitalist society through the activities of women..." (1982: 213)

The contradictions in the novel, then, which to Ian Watt are a product of Defoe's technical incompetence, are attributed a more positive value, in Chaber's analysis, as representations of "the contradictions in the condition of women under capitalism." (1982: 213) Chaber's emphasis on these contradictions removes the burden of guilt from Moll herself - where, she feels, many traditional critics including Ian Watt, have placed it - and focuses instead on the extent to which Moll is forced into crime by the laws of an unjust society. "The novel," writes Chaber, "reveals a chain of criminality in which Moll is merely one link...[since] Moll is surrounded by persons as manipulative, mercenary and deceptive as she is..." (1982: 213) But the criminal redundancy of Moll's world is a consequence not only of the collection of rogues with whom she keeps company, but more importantly of a "cancer multiplying throughout the social body." The work of Chaber's analysis is to diagnose the forms of this "cancer" in vindication of the novel's heroine.

The distinction between Ian Watt's reading of Moll Flanders, and Lois Chaber's, would seem then to underwrite a distinction between two different ways of viewing identity, which have produced two different interpretations of the novel. Where Chaber sees the character of Moll as the medium through which Defoe reveals to us the "concrete social and legal conditions throttling woman's potential", Ian Watt sees her as a somewhat clumsy or ill-conceived embodiment of what should amount to the innate and abstract qualities of women themselves. Because, as he puts it, Moll "accepts none of the disabilities of her sex," Watt considers that the essence of her fictional character and actions is "masculine". In this formulation, Watt is measuring Defoe's success in his portrayal of the character of Moll Flanders against his own notion of what constitutes

femininity, and this he believes is something which should be common to all women. One's identity then, according to Watt's view is innate, inherent, "natural"; and women are innately, inherently different from men. The view of identity implicit in Chaber's article, on the other hand, takes identity to be socially and culturally contingent, largely a consequence of the social environment in which it is forged, a "product of the historical process".

Watt is prepared to concede that his own prognosis on Moll's "essential masculinity" is a "personal impression" which would be difficult, if not impossible to establish. But it is at least certain, he goes on, "that Moll accepts none of the disabilities of her sex, and indeed one cannot but feel that Virginia Woolf's admiration for her was largely due to admiration of a heroine who so fully realised one of the ideals of feminism: freedom from any involuntary involvement in the feminine role." (1987[1957]: 113) The crucial point here is how exactly to define "the feminine role". Moll's failure to fulfill it is attributed by Watt to Defoe's shortcomings as a novelist, to his inability to portray his protagonists in a truly "lifelike" manner - an attitude which, I would suggest, could in turn be attributed to the limitations in his critical views as to what constitutes a good novel, to what J. Paul Hunter (1988) might have called his "anxieties about realism"[7]; an attitude which is now compounded with some further "anxieties", this time about the question of "femininity", along with a somewhat narrow view of what constitute the "ideals of feminism". Rather than aspiring to free themselves from "involuntary involvement in the feminine role", what many feminists would wish to underline, once and for all, is the fact that the mythological "feminine role" is itself the problem, that the "feminine role", such as it is, has no natural existence, and is itself an ideological construct.

In my view, Moll's evasion, as a fictional construct, of any readily available sexed definition, her uneasy vacillation between the so-called masculine and feminine roles, and even more important, her vacillations within the various available assignations of "the feminine" - alternately and at once wife, mistress, mother, whore - constitute neither a structural weakness in the novel, nor are they to be read as an index of Moll's "confused psychology". Rather, her vacillations are best read as evasions, resistances, refusals of the fixing of identity and all that it entails. In support of this idea, I would now like to turn to Denise Riley.

III

In her recent essay Am I that Name?, Riley traces the trajectory of the categorisation of women - of social and discursive constructions of female identity - from medieval times to the present. Her thesis is that the unmet needs and sufferings of women spring both from a concrete social reality of oppression, as well as from the ways in which women are positioned or defined, often harshly or stupidly, as "women". Thus from Renaissance theological definitions of woman as the "inferior of the male by nature, his equal by grace"; through Rousseauesque invocations of the "sex" of a woman as a generally suffusing characteristic ("The male is only a male now and again, the female is always a female, or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex"), to the Hegelian conception of woman as intelligible only within her various immersions in the family, Riley maps the increasing saturation, across the centuries, of women with their sex.

"The troubles of 'women'," she writes, "...aren't unique." But they are arguably peculiar in that women - half the human population - have suffered from a peculiar "weight of characterization". This represents one part of the double bind with which feminism, in Riley's view, now has to deal. On the one hand it is clear that the actions and needs of women have to be fished out of obscurity, to be made more visible. At the same time, it is also evident that, as Riley insists, "there are always too many invocations of "women", too much visibility, too many attempts to categorise women which would be better dissolved again." (4)

Riley is totally opposed to all notions of an innate female identity, an identity which is natural to all women, and which renders them ideal for certain roles, certain occupations, while not for others. In her view, one's identity is never fixed, never stable, and it is only sometimes dependent on one's sex. Identity then, is a perpetually fluctuating state. Her study is aimed at exposing the essentially artificial nature of all the numerous definitions and categorisations over the centuries of feminine identity, and of the supposedly pre-ordained "feminine role" in society. Riley's thesis is that in the end, what these definitions describe has nothing to do with the innate characteristics of women, only with the way they have been positioned in patriarchal society.

According to Riley, the legacy of the eighteenth century was an intensification of the notion of a "naturalised femininity" placed firmly within the domestic realm, within the family. Indeed, Defoe could be said to have made his own contribution to this legacy in the form of his "conduct manuals", The Family Instructor (1715,1718) Religious Courtship (1722) and Conjugal Lewdness (1727). In these manuals, Defoe provides us with a particularly obvious

case of the "positioning" of women in patriarchal social systems, their "subjection" in language. Part of the project of these manuals is of course precisely to define "the feminine role", to delimit a fixed position, indeed a fixed identity, for women.

In a recent reading of the conduct manuals, Carol Houlihan Flynn (see Flynn, 1987) concludes that in Defoe's ideal domestic economy, the wife would necessarily voluntarily surrender her will, first of all to God's and then to that of the husband. It is no doubt true - and Flynn concedes the fact - that Defoe, who insisted that there be "justice" between husband and wife - could be called an "early champion of feminist ideals". But Flynn suggests that in the manuals, he speaks for a system which is "at war with its own imperatives": While they do grant certain freedoms to women, the manuals simultaneously advocate that women maintain a submissive role and that they remain fixed within the domestic realm.

Also, although Defoe outlaws any form of physical coercion by the husband, he nevertheless demands an "affectionate compliance" from the wife. Like the "subject" in Althusserian theory, the woman must freely choose her subjection; while no woman should be <u>forced</u> to obey her husband, every woman should freely choose her subjection to the husband's will: "The woman," writes Defoe, "not only must submit to family instruction, but also must submit consciously, even joyously." (cited in Flynn, 1987: 80) In this way, her subjection can be made to appear both "necessary" and "natural" - "a voluntary submission to the good." "I don't take the state of Matrimony to be designed as that of apprentices who are bound to the Family, and that the Wife is to be us'd only as the Upper Servant in the House," claims Defoe in <u>Conjugal Lewdness</u> (cited in Flynn, 1987: 81) But when all is said and done, the patriarchal

dispensation advanced in the manuals insists absolutely upon submission to the law of the father.

In the novels, many of the contradictions implicit in the writings of the conduct manuals are thrown strongly into relief. This, as Flynn points out, is because of the "terrible instability" revealed in his novelistic domestic economies but absent in the conduct manuals:

> When Defoe, the author of conduct manuals, demands self-control and moral management, he presupposes a domestic life of stability and substance safe from arbitrary intrusions from invisible hands. His citizens and their wives worry over mutual subordination and family worship, but they are always certain that they possess a parlour to pray in. His novelistic domestic economies, however, reveal a terrible instability. (1987: 84)

In the novels - not least in Moll Flanders - "the moral imperatives of the conduct manuals become what Moll calls 'by the way', irrelevant incidentals in a world of tragic-comic accidents where your husband turns out to be your brother and your serving-maid is actually your daughter... Family structures turn perverse, while the 'natural' self apparently regulated in the conduct manuals strains against material circumstances that make nuclear domesticity not only 'imaginary', but unimaginable." (1987: 85) What emerges in the novels, in other words, is no less than the impossibility of the feminine ideal represented in the manuals, since only in an atmosphere of total domestic and economic stability - virtually impossible to sustain in reality - could such an ideal be met.

In Moll Flanders, I would suggest, Defoe's presentation of "the fortunes and misfortunes" of his famous heroine goes one step further, to reveal not only the impossibility of the conduct book exemplar, but the artificiality of many of those patriarchal organisations of the female sex into specific positions in society. From the moment of her birth, and throughout her eventful life, Moll will shift uneasily between the various positions available to her as a woman in a patriarchal and capitalist society, thus exposing the artificial nature of those positions. (As we learn from the title page itself, she will be... "12 year a whore, 5 times a wife (whereof once to her own brother) 12 year a thief, 8 year a transported felon in Virginia, at last grew rich, lived honest and died a penitent".)[8] Often this instability takes the form of a disparity between Moll's designation in the eyes of the law (her official designation, or position) and the role she is forced into by the reality of her social situation (her actual position):

For example, her first legal marriage to her lover's brother - the younger son of the family who takes her in on the death of her "Mistress-Nurse" - finds Moll "wife" in the eyes of the law to a man she perceives more as a "brother-in-law", while legally "sister-in-law" to the one to whom for some time she has been "Mistress", and to whom in reality she feels it her right to call herself "wife": In Moll's words, "he should never be able to say that I who he had persuaded to call myself his Wife, and who had given him the Liberty to use me as a Wife, was not as Faithful to him as a Wife ought to be, what ever he might be to me." (MF, 39) To her lover, on the other hand, Moll may be defined in whatever way appears most convenient to him at the time, while whatever else she is or has been can remain "wrapt up in an eternal Silence":

> But here my Dear, says he, you may come into a safe Station, and appear with Honour and with splendor at once, and the Remembrance of what we have done may be wrapt up in an eternal Silence, as if it had never happen'd; you shall always have my respect, and my sincere Affection, only then it shall be Honest, and perfectly Just to my Brother; you shall be my Dear Sister, as now you are my Dear -------- and there he stop'd.
>
> Your Dear whore, says I, you would have said, if you had gone on, and you might as well have said it...However, I desire you to remember... that I was your Wife intentionally, tho' not in the Eye of the World, and that it was as effectual a Marriage that had pass'd between us as if we had been publickly Wedded by the Parson of the Parish..." (MF, 59)

Not only is she "Wife" at heart to one man, while to another "in the Eye of the World", Moll's predicament also makes her an adultress, in spirit even if not in the eye of the law. The rift between one's public persona - the name one assumes in the Eye of the World - and that which one assumes in private is often, as Moll's commentary after her husband's death suggests, formidable:

> I confess I was not suitably affected with the loss of my Husband...for he was a tender, kind, good humour'd Man as any Woman could desire; but his Brother being so always in my sight, at least, while we were in the Country, was a continual Snare to me; and I never was in Bed with my Husband, but I wish'd my self in the Arms of his Brother; and tho' his Brother never offer'd me the least Kindness that way, after our Marriage, but carried it just as a Brother ought to do; yet, it was

> impossible for me to do so to him: In short, I committed Adultery and Incest with him every Day in my Desires, which without doubt, was as effectually criminal in the Nature of the Guilt, as if I had actually done it. (MF, 76)

Later, Moll will find herself legally still married to her "gentleman-trader" husband, the draper (and therefore, as she puts it, "limitted" from marrying again) while in reality single, and forced again to put herself on the marriage "market". Having been abandoned to fend for herself by the draper, who escapes to France after landing them both in debt, Moll nevertheless remains his wife in the eye of the law. In actuality, as she wryly remarks, she is more of a widow since she expects never to see her husband again. The social position Moll finds herself in as a result could hardly be more awkward:

> However with all this... I found upon casting things up, my Case was very much alter'd, and my Fortune much lessen'd... and my Condition was very odd, for tho' I had no Child, (I had one by my Gentleman Draper, but it was buried,) yet I was a Widow bewitched, I had a Husband, and no Husband, and I could not pretend to Marry again, tho' I knew well enough my Husband would never see England any more, if he liv'd fifty Years: Thus I say, I was limitted from Marriage, what Offer soever might be made me: and I had not one Friend to advise with, in the Condition I was in, at least not one I durst Trust the Secret of my Circumstances to, for if the Commissioners were to have been inform'd where I was, I should have been fetch'd up and examin'd upon Oath, and all I had sav'd be taken away from me. (MF, 80)

Later still, in Virginia, Moll will find herself legally married to a man who actually turns out to be her half-brother, making her both wife and sister to the same man, while simultaneously mother and aunt to their two children. The moment of Moll's discovery of her actual plight is one of the many moments in the novel when the constitutive power of language - its power to position and place the human subject - is brought sharply into relief. For some time, Moll has lived prosperously, thinking herself "the happiest Creature alive" when, in a moment, an "odd and surprising Event" renders her condition "the most uncomfortable, if not the most miserable, in the World." (MF, 68) The "Event" Moll here refers to is effectively an event of language, the "Story" in which her mother reveals her true name - one which leaves Moll "the most unhappy of all Women in the World": "O had the Story never been told me," laments Moll, "all had been well; it had been no Crime to have lain with my Husband, since as to his being my Relation, I had known nothing of it." (MF, 70) It is only once her condition is named - placed within the "prison-house" of language - that it takes on any real significance Moll.

Moll's precarious and contradictory identity, generated in a succession of fictional situations such as the above, in which she simultaneously assumes conflicting social positions, reads as a form of "resistance" to the roles that the narrative prepares for her - a refusal of the positions offered her in a patriarchal and capitalist society, a refusal to submit to the forms of organization of sexuality which result in the production of those sexual categories, "male" and "female", on which sexual discrimination is based. Moll "resists" all fixed social positions, even as they are thrust upon her, and in the process lays bare what

Riley might call their "inherent shakiness". None of these positions, any more than the meaning of the words in which they are inscribed, are "natural", sacrosanct or inviolate.

Another symptom of that "shakiness", appears in the ambiguity surrounding the term "'gentlewoman". What would it mean to fall under the designation "gentlewoman"? To the linguistically untutored Moll, the genteel world represents the possibility of evading the role she is destined for through birth - that of a servant. An emblem of her desire for independence, the gentlewoman, as she tells the mayoress, would be anyone "that did not go to service, to do House-Work". Moll is yet too naive to appreciate the social meaning of the word, its public significance ("for [my good old nurse, Mrs. Mayoress, and all the rest of them] meant one Sort of thing, by the Word Gentlewoman, and I meant quite another") and later she will confuse the term with that of "prosititute", or as her Nurse puts it, "Person of ill Fame". In its official sense, as recorded in the OED, the designation "gentlewoman" ("a woman of good birth or breeding, a lady") is forever denied to those not born to it; it is inherent. As an orphan, then, Moll's pretensions to the genteel life threaten the "natural" social order, the social status quo; hence the reactions of outrage and amusement Moll's aspirations provoke in her nurse ("...why, what? said she, is the Girl mad?") and in the mayoress. But in the fiction, on more than one occasion during her life as a thief, Moll's very success in this vocation will depend on her ability to adopt a gentlewoman's guise, to pass herself off as a lady. (see, for example, MF, 165 ff.) In the resulting conflation of two apparently disparate roles, two ostensibly opposing identities - that of thief and lady - Moll reveals the artificial nature of both. One is neither inherently a gentlewoman, nor is one inherently a thief. Inherently - to adopt Riley's model - one is only a fluctuating identity, publicly fixed and privately re-defined.

The continual tension between Moll's public and private persona, her predicament as a woman who leans away[9] from the positions prepared for her by her culture, who exceeds the limits of her expected narrative role, forces Moll into a secretive existence, a life of masks and masquerades, as she strains to accomodate the forms of her desires and aspirations to the restricting forms of her subjection to the law.[10] Thus on the brink of her first sexual affair, Moll will leave the house to meet her lover hooded and concealed behind a face mask. (MF, 23) After the desertion to France of her second husband, the draper, Moll is forced by circumstance to lodge herself where she is totally unknown, to dress in the habit of a widow and to assume the pseudonym Mrs. Flanders. (MF, 51) The success of her elaborate seduction of her next husband, undertaken with the help of her intimate friend, the Captain's Lady, is contingent on her masquerading as a "widow of fortune". (MF, 61 ff) Outside the moral order through most of the novel, both as a woman who will not be contained by the sexual definitions of her culture, and as a criminal, Moll's only defence is her virtual anonymity, even amongst her partners in crime:

> Here again my old Caution stood me in good stead; Namely, that tho' I often robb'd with these People, yet I never let them know who I was, or where I Lodg'd... my Name was publick among them indeed; but how to find me out they knew not... and this wariness was my safety upon all these Occasions. (MF, 173)

Indeed, her entire narrative is written under an assumed name - that of Moll Flanders - as a form of protection from the law, since her true name, as she writes,

is still so well known in the records of two significant representatives of the law in eighteenth century England - Newgate Prison, and the criminal court adjoining it, the Old Bailey.

Ultimately, Moll's anonymity - her refusal to be publicly named, officially placed in the eye of the law - reads as yet another refusal of her subjection to the patriarchal and capitalistic forms of organization of her fictional world. And it is here, as I have already suggested, that the novel makes its most important statement for feminism. Further testimony to the strength of the novel's resistance to patriarchal structures lies in its heroine's disruption of the classifications and preconceptions of traditional literary criticism. All attempts, on the part of critics such as Ian Watt to define Moll, to categorise her, to label her, to "put her in her place" as a character, as representation of "woman", have thus far proved inconclusive. Critics continue to compete amongst themselves for the final word, and Moll continues to refuse to let them have it.

What the continuing critical debates over the character of Moll represent is the critics' desire for "complete elucidation"[11] of her, total knowledge of her; and if possession of knowledge means possession of power, then so far in this struggle for knowledge, for possession of power, it is Moll who has emerged victorious. Perhaps this is what Joyce had in mind when he said that Christian Davies, together with the "adventuress Roxana" and the "unforgettable harlot Moll Flanders", forms the trio of female characters which has reduced contemporary criticism to stupefied impotence.

NOTES

All page references to Moll Flanders will be to the Norton Critical Edition (1973. Kelly, Edward (ed.) New York: W.W. Norton and Co.), and will be included in the text, abbreviated as MF.

1. The concepts of transference and countertransference are notoriously difficult to define, the reason for this, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, being that "for many authors the notion has taken on a very broad extension, even coming to connote all the phenomena which constitute the patient's relationship with the psychoanalyst." (Laplanche: 456) For our purposes, Toril Moi's rough definition in Patriarchal Thought and the Drive for Knowledge will do: "If Transference in analysis can be roughly defined as the process whereby the patient transfers earlier traumas and reactions, whether real or imaginary, on to the analyst, countertransference may be characterized as the analyst's more or less unconscious reactions to the discourse of the patient, or rather to the transference of the patient. Transference and countertransference engage analyst and analysand in a complex, differential set of interactions, which may literally 'make or break' the analysis. The truth of the analysis, its power to cure, is the discursive construction of this transferential network..." (1989: 197)

2. For the most part, the collection of essays in Defoe: The Critical Heritage (see Rogers, 1972) along with those in the Norton Critical Edition (1973) are representative of this tradition. Apart from one or two exceptions, my analysis of the tradition will concentrate on articles reproduced in these two critical anthologies.

3. In his chapter on Moll Flanders in Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures (1975), Richetti describes the novel as the "centre" of the critical debate surrounding Defoe's irony: "In that argument," he writes, "Ian Watt's distinction between a consciously ironic work with a coherent ironic structure and a work like Moll Flanders which is primarily ironic in our perception of it as such strikes me as conclusive. Watt admits that there are occasional ironic situations, but he argues persuasively that the deep moral inconsistencies in the book derive not from Defoe's moral plan but from related formal and ideological problems..." (1975: 94) Some replies to Watt's argument have rested on Defoe's journalism, which makes it clear that he used irony more clearly (and more effectively) elsewhere and therefore must be employing it in Moll Flanders. In Richetti's view, Watt himself provides a fair compromise between the two positions in his survey of the controversy in "The Recent Critical Fortunes of Moll Flanders", in Eighteenth Century Studies, 1 (1967): The point to begin with in any discussion of Moll Flanders, notes Richetti, is, as Watt put it, that "Defoe's genius as an observer, together with a narrative technique that did not force him to prejudge his material, may well have produced a masterpiece which is, unintentionally but enduringly, a comprehensive image of the ambiguous and dehumanizing conflicts into which modern civilization plunges its unhappy natives." (Richetti, 1975: 95) All these arguments are based on a (pre-Freudian) notion of a unified expressive subject, whose intentions are pure and whose mastery of language is (or should be) complete - a view of the subject disrupted by Defoe's writing, and particularly by Moll Flanders. Traditional criticism then attempts to explain this disruption by locating it as a problem of irony. My own approach will seek to explain the problem differently by locating it

precisely as a problem of the inadequacy of pre-Freudian notions of the subject, identity and intention in language as founding assumptions for the analysis of literary texts.

4. The tendency to hold the morality of women as by nature questionable goes back at least to the Renaissance, during which time it was generally believed that woman's assignation to the cold and moist humours - her chemical make-up - undermined her emotional control and her reasoning powers - since the latter were associated with warmth and dryness. Only in the next life, after death, would woman be free of her inferiority to men. (see Riley, 1988: 18-35) In The Renaissance Notion of Woman, Ian Maclean points out that most writers in the Renaissance suggest that woman is less well endowed than man with moral apparatus, and continue the practice of praising saintly women for their "paradoxical" virtue. But, like woman's subordination to her husband and her disqualification from full participation in the spiritual life, this inequality is attached to this life only, and all commentators stress that she will share equally in the joys of paradise: "In theological terms, woman is, therefore, the inferior of the male by nature, his equal by grace." (Riley, 1988: 25) Equally damaging is the more modern opposing myth which, as Lois Chaber puts it, reserves for women the "humanity" atrophied in men competing in a vicious capitalistic society: "Excluded from production by capitalistic society, women were left to gain their identity from the inner world of psychological-emotional life, and they were endowed with a moral superiority to compensate for their economic diminution." (Chaber, 1982: 223) In fact, this is more likely to be the myth subscribed to - whether consciously or unconsciously - by modern patriarchal critics, such as Watt. It is from

expectations rooted in this sexist myth, suggests Chaber, that reactions of disbelief and moral outrage at Moll's behaviour are derived.

5. For Defoe's own analysis of the evolving displacement of the aristocracy by the middle class, see his Conjugal Lewdness, or Matrimonial Whoredom - A Treatise on the Use and Abuse of the Marriage Bed, pp 256-57. See also Juliet Mitchell's social historical analysis in her introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of the novel: "In essence, the novel is a vivid dramatization of the conflicts and confusions over values that took place in one of the most interesting periods of English history - a period of turmoil during the establishment of the moral and legal basis of modern capitalist society... The changes had to be worked through at all levels of society. The old values not only had to be overthrown but also had to be replaced. In a very real way the ground rules of everday life and 'common sense' terms and notions had to be re-defined. Thus the period is one of profound value confusion and of unusual social, economic and moral mobility - the like of which has not been seen since in England." (1978: 5, 10)

6. One of the quarrels Marxist feminists have with classic Marxism is its failure to invesitigate the historical effects on patriarchal relations of changes in modes of production. See, for example, Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, "Feminism and Materialism", and Roison McDonough, "Patriarchy and Relations of Production", in Kuhn and Wolpe (eds.) Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978)

7. In a recent article called "Novels and 'the Novel': The Poetics of Embarrassment" (Hunter, 1988), J. Paul Hunter brings into focus a number of those features in

the eighteenth century novel which, he says, "embarrass" readers who bring to the novel "rigid formal expectations" because these features do not "fit" the readers' conceptions of what the eighteenth century novel is, or ought to be. One of the main problems with the way in which many readers approach the novel, according to Hunter, stems from what he calls their "anxieties about 'realism'." Hunter points out that in discussions of the novel, the term has tended to become normative, so that novels tend to be judged qualitatively on the degree or amount of realism to be found in each, as if more is better. He suggests that modern criticism of all kinds, criticism of fiction in particular, but also criticism of drama, poetry and autobiography, tends to be realism-centred, with individual works achieving a place on the scale directly proportional to the amount of "reality" that can be certified and tallied up in each: "Traditional novelistic theory, based as it is on analogies with more traditional and more conservative literary forms and the structures that support them, does not like to hear the multiple voices in novels or recognize the presence of competing modes within individual works. Recent narrative theory has been more willing to accept odd, lumpy, and unexpected features, but criticism concerned primarily with novels... remain[s] intolerant of features that do not meet preconceived standards. Definitions remain high-minded, novels recalcitrant." (480) These ideas seem particularly pertinent in the case of Ian Watt: Influenced as he is by his own anxieties about realism, Watt's final verdict on Defoe conceded that "history" may have lent his "artless veracity" an "adventitious charm", but that this should not deceive us as to his real worth: "We rejoice to see a writer so innocently unaware of how novels are supposed to be written, and we are tempted to find irony

and moral sophistication because we cannot credit that so remarkable a writer and so amazing a man could have produced so many contradictions in a spirit of genuine naivety. That, at least, is the main problem his novels pose for readers today."

8. My account of the fluctuating nature of female identity can be contrasted with Richetti's suggestion (see Richetti, 1975) that: "The imaginative centre of Moll Flanders lies in its ratification of the possibility of private survival and even autonomy." (1975: 140) For Richetti, the problem of Moll's fluctuation is resolved by the following hypothesis: "Moll responds to events and dominates them, but she cannot be said to initiate them. What she must have of a primary and assertive nature is a residual self we have already observed in the process of being frustrated and submerged because of the nature of the social world." (1975: 101) Richetti's account would seem to be influenced by an American style "ego-psychology" in which the self can always emerge triumphant: "...the real movement of Defoe's novels is not simply towards the determinants of character but rather towards the depiction of a dialectic between self and other which has as its end a covert but triumphant assertion of the self." (1975: 96) My own account stresses a different Freudian theme: that of the instability of identity, and particularly female identity, its constant failing rather than its "triumphant assertion".

9. The reference is to "Woman, leaning away", by South African poet Ingrid de Kok, from her recent anthology Familiar Ground (Ravan Press, 1988). One of the themes explored in de Kok's poetry is the complex of identities and positions demanded of women in South African society today.

10. It is interesting to note the connection between the "mask of womanliness" adopted by analyst Joan Riviere's patient (see Riviere, 1986[1929]) and the series of false identities Moll is forced to assume in order to survive in her fictional social environment. The case from which Riviere develops her argument involves a successful intellectual woman who sought reassurance from men after her public engagements by adopting "a mask of womanliness" as a defence - "to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men." (1986[1919]: 35) What emerges from the case is a notion of femininity as itself a masquerade - 'the woman' as male fiction, construction, condition (Heath, 1986: 49) Although none of the masquerades adopted by Moll involve the assumption specifically of Riviere's patient's "mask of womanliness", in both cases the need to assume a false identity springs from the impossibilty of the positions assigned to women by patriarchal systems of organization.

11. The reference is to Freud's expression of his own desire for "complete elucidation" in the case of Dora: "I should have been very well satisfied if the circumstances had allowed me to give a complete elucidation of this case of petite hysterie. And my experience with other patients leaves me in no doubt that my analytic method would have enabled me to do so..." (Freud, 1905[1901]: 54)

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