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David Wagenknecht

Reading Organ Speech in "The Sandman", *Hamlet* and Freud's Theoretical Language

It is by now a commonplace that the power of the Freudian dispensation – which seems to exceed, even as it specializes, the capacity of ordinary *reading* – coincides with one or more crises of representation one can locate in Freud's major theoretical texts. Whether this should best be considered a scandal or a golden opportunity for hermeneutic athleticism has always been a question: Lacan's genius (and capacity for aggression) was strong enough to translate the hermeneutic approach boldly into a "return to Freud", but most other commentators, even those who love Freud's writings most passionately (and/or who practice psychoanalysis) are occasionally left wondering whether their arguments *for* the power of the discourse which depend on certain representational naivetes of the master can possibly be argued in good faith[1]. The issue is much older than Lacan's linguistics, of course, and depends on what we may think of as the "original" division in Freud's thought between a biological scientificity – hypothesizing an "objective" energetics of instinct – and a more psychological vocabulary reflective of manifest experience. And of course it is just this issue which is so often embroiled in the more "social" questions about Freud: his reasons for abandoning the seduction theory or for adopting the theory of the death-drive. Moreover, most statements of Freud's concepts which command our imaginative attention remind us of their relation to this original division, e.g. the following hard-headed remark by a recent commentator:

1 Examples abound, but perhaps the most distinguished "positive" approach to the problem remains Jean Laplanche's *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, Baltimore & London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, and a distinguished "negative" approach is Samuel Weber's *The Legend of Freud*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

> when Freud states that an instinct, though having its source somewhere in the body, can only be known via its attached mental representation..., we are led to suspect that the mental representation that supposedly betrays the presence of an instinct might well be the essence of the phenomenon: that what Freud refers to in his concept of instinct is nothing other than motivated human action of an affective sort carried on either overtly or in imagination and either consciously, preconsciously, or unconsciously[2].

On the one hand we have a problem of "ordinary language". When Freud remarks "An instinct can never become an object of consciousness – only the idea that represents the instinct can" ("The Unconscious")[3], we may argue *that in the sentence as apprehended by a reader* the distinction Freud makes is nul and void so long as we know the meaning of the word "instinct" – its semiotic significance is indistinguishable from the semiotic significance of the word "idea" – yet we are under the impression we understand Freud's distinction. More philosophically we have a problem whereby a speculative entity – a proposed existent like "instinct" – very quickly assumes a foundational reality as the discussion ensues; as the commentary above complains, it very quickly passes from being a kind of placeholder in a conceptual equation, and starts to "mean what it says". The difference between psychoanalysis and other conceptual machinery we are used to encountering, is that it is itself inconceivable without such scandals coming to pass, because the essence of the unconscious is its inconceivability, and yet interestingly the most "advanced" hermeneutic (as opposed to substantialist) translation of Freud we have is the most insistent on the inscrutability of this concept. Freud's intellectual development is understood by Lacan to depend on Freud's

2 Donald L. Carveth, "Psychoanalytic Conceptions of the Passions", in *Freud and the Passions*, ed. John O'Neill, University Park, Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, p. 32.

3 "The Unconscious", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey et al., London, The Hogarth Press, 1953-74, vol. xix, p. 177. All future references to Freud's works in English are to this edition and will be abbreviated as follows: S.E. 14.177. References to the texts in German are taken from *Gesammelte Werke*, 18 Bände, ed. Anna Freud et al., Frankfurt, S. Fischer Verlag, 1960-68, abbreviated G.W.

own tendency to betray the radical alterity of the unconscious, to fall, as it were, into the foundational errors of his ways.

My purpose here is to pursue and illustrate the "scandal" of Freud's unwarranted foundationalism by a close analysis of passages in his 1915 essay "The Unconscious", but not for the usual conceptual or critical reasons. Rather I am interested in the connection between this foundationalism and the creation of performing characters (dramatism) in explanatory narratives generally, an application I will illustrate with a discussion of E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" (1816/17). My idea is to hypothesize a generating matrix simultaneously active in the foundational problematic of Freud's theoretical texts (where representation of psychic defence against instinctual demands is evoked) and in certain literary fictions (where psychic exigencies are dramatized). A repeated discovery of the discussion is that attempts to instantiate the qualities of the matrix dialectically inevitably fail, which suggests that contradictory agencies seem to be cooperatively at work within, agencies which are difficult to rationalize in strictly logical or grammatical forms, but which work regularly regardless. I associate these agencies – though I am reluctant to "name" them – with the narrating/interpreting capacities on the one hand, and with performing/dramatizing capacities on the other. I believe that Freud's "foundational" indiscretions are in a curious way related to Nathaniel's homicidal homophobic rage against Clara in "The Sandman", and that both of these "errors" can be linked to this shared conundrum in psychic expression. The expressivity in question suggests that one way of describing the unconscious is by way of the aporia – or extra-logical figuration – which registers the collision/collusion between narrating interpretation and "acting out".

Since it may not be accidental to the matrix I have in mind that homicidal gender-rage is a common fantasy by-product, it concerns me that Freud's essay on "The Unconscious" will come to rest on a famous definition of the unconscious which is derived from the verbal behavior of a schizophrenic girl (Tausk's patient) whose condition is strictly-speaking beyond the comprehension of the essay (as a psychotic). It is not a little interesting, moreover, that her verbal behavior, which Freud after Tausk calls "organ speech" (S.E. 14.198), suggests resistance to a marionette-like performance of abuse (to

which she would have succumbed were she an hysteric) corresponding in many respects to the fate of Olympia in Hoffmann's story. Since I believe "The Sandman" owes not a little to *Hamlet* – which is perhaps the supreme literary expression of Nathaniel's oedipal difficulties, and since Ophelia has an effect on Hamlet similar to Clara/Olympia's on Nathaniel, and is almost as brutally dispensed with, I will also take the occasion to refer at times to Shakespeare's play[4]. Tausk's patient's "organ speech" (in Freud's representation of it) and Hamlet's antic discourse finally frame the rest of the discussion.

* * * * * *

In the midst of all manner of theoretical brilliance, what stands in "The Unconscious" (1915) as its moment of greatest security is no doubt the account offered in the fourth section of phobias. This description returns Freud to the work of classification of neuroses and symptomology which is the foundation of his work, and there is an ease and fluency to this complex description which bespeak an expertise born of long familiarity. Perhaps because as we read, however, we notice some resemblance between the nature of the theoretical account and a virtuosity in the symptom-constructions of the patients themselves, our admiration for Freud's account begins to be inhabited by a certain anxiety lest his constructions in the end prove as fragile as theirs. It is noteworthy, also, that the explanations manage in very complex ways to register both explanatory and dramatizing forces.

> We must suppose that there was present in the *Ucs.* some love-impulse demanding to be transposed into the system *Pcs.*; but the cathexis directed to it from the latter system has drawn back from the impulse (as though in an attempt at flight) and the unconscious libidinal cathexis of the rejected idea has been discharged in the form of anxiety.

4 I am encouraged to do so also by having been enlightened by commentaries on both works by Stanley Cavell, "Hamlet's Burden of Proof", in *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 179-91, and (for "The Sandman") *In Quest of the Ordinary*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 155-57.

> On the occasion of a repetition (if there should be one) of this process, a first step is taken in the direction of mastering the unwelcome development of anxiety. The [*Pcs.*] cathexis that has taken flight attaches itself to a substitute idea which, on the one hand, is connected by association with the rejected idea, and, on the other, has escaped repression by reason of its remoteness from that idea. This substitutive idea – a 'substitute by displacement' – permits the still uninhibitable development of anxiety to be rationalized. It now plays the part of an anticathexis for the system *Cs.* (*Pcs.*), by securing it against an emergence in the *Cs.* of the repressed idea. On the other hand it is, or acts as if it were, the point of departure for the release of the anxiety-affect, which has now really become uninhibitable. (S.E. 14.182)

What makes this rich passage of explanation seem literarily attractive? We see a psychic agency having recourse to two very different modes of obfuscation (explanatory rationalization and "acting out") and simultaneously suffering (as a "locus") contradictory demands of loss and renewal. This appeals to our imagination, but our response also has something to do with a certain loss of distinction, at times, between psychic processes and the theoretical constructions designed to explain them. Any effort to establish some representational hierarchy, where the behavior of the psyche would constitute a performance of which Freud's theoretical language would be the representation has been the first victim of the nature of Freud's understanding of psychic process, and yet it is not unreasonable to experience panic when we realize he has placed it beyond our grasp.

As already suggested, however, I am anxious to align this panic with responses to analogous instantiations later in Freud's essay and in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story. Freud offers us something meta-logical, even dramatic: a kind of personified energetics dependent on mutual non-recognition. He proposes a substitutive idea which is an evasion, both a stand-in and a dynamic rationalization for an idea different from itself. What corresponds most closely to this in the conduct of the essay as a whole is the schizophrenic definition of the unconscious held in abeyance until the very end of the essay, a definition embodied in a character foreign to the nature of the rest of the discussion (a psychotic – Tausk's patient), a character moreover capable of telling us her condition in an analytic commentary, but not "knowing" her own condition. Even more remarkably, figurally

like Olympia in Hoffmann's story, she feels that her eyes are being twisted, and that she is being jerked about. This correspondence is generated on the one hand "foundationally" by the psychic entities in question but on the other by the fact that Freud's control of the narrative process of his essay succumbs to something very like what Hoffmann, a hundred years earlier, dramatizes through the division between the rationality of Clara and the fetishizing performance of the marionette Olympia. In Hoffmann's story, too, the "psychotic" production of Olympia seems a response to some kind of representational impasse within the rational, interpretive capacities personified by Clara.

Freud's production of Tausk's abused-feeling girl, beyond the self-defined limits of his discourse, may have been a function of awareness that his essay on "the unconscious" keeps moving uncontrollably in the direction of consciousness. The third section of the essay illustrates this tendency very well even as Freud seems intent on redressing the difficulty. "We have limited the foregoing discussion to ideas", he begins, as if already aware he might be moving in a paradoxical direction, "we may now raise a new question... We have said that there are conscious and unconscious ideas; but are there also unconscious instinctual impulses, emotions and feelings, or is it in this instance meaningless to form combinations of the kind? [solche Zusammensetzungen zu bilden?]" (S.E. 14.177; GW x.275). The threshold of anxiety in all of Freud's writings where vocabularies of scientificity come into contact with issues of representation is visible here, and in the following three pages (of the Standard edition) there are involved in his explanations at least ten references to linguistic conventions (beginning with "compounds" [Zusammensetzungen] in the first paragraph), a self-consciousness apparently aware that he is not quite clear himself as to whether the difficulties he experiences have primarily to do with language or with facticity.

Further the tendency to put "instinctual impulses, emotions and feelings" on the same level, or, to use an expression of Strachey's, "on all fours" with ideas seems to contradict the spirit of a rather elaborate distinction developed in the parallel essay "Repression" (1915):

> In our discussion so far we have dealt with the repression of an instinctual representative, and by the latter we have understood an idea or group of ideas which is cathected with a definite quota [einem bestimmten Betrag] of psychical energy (libido or interest) coming from an instinct. Clinical observation now obliges us to divide up [zerlegen] what we have hitherto regarded as a single entity; for it shows us that besides the idea, some other element representing the instinct has to be taken into account, and that this other element undergoes vicissitudes of repression [ein Verdrängungsschicksal] which may be quite different from those undergone by the idea. For this other element of the psychical representative the term *quota of affect* has been generally adopted. It corresponds to the instinct in so far as the latter has become detached from the idea and finds expression, proportionate to its quantity, in processes which are sensed as affects. From this point on, in describing a case of repression, we shall have to follow up separately what, as a result of repression, becomes of the *idea*, and what becomes of the instinctual energy linked to it. (S.E. 14.152; GW x.254-55)

Freud's first articulation of "instinctual representative" here seems *anti*-foundational. The idea or groups of ideas which "represent" the drive are simply "cathected with a definite quota of psychical energy (libido or interest) coming from an instinct" (152). The physicality of the account of cathexis, wherein "quota" [Betrag] is stressed, seems to argue for association rather than anything foundational in the relationship of idea to instinct. That is, there is no hint that we should assume the idea to "express" or "mean" the instinct. It may "manifest" it, to use a term that appears often in Strachey's translation, but this manifestation is more a representation in the sense of delegation than it is a "meaning".

Should we, then, register conceptual alarm, something akin to panic, when what has hitherto seemed a unified "entity" of representation is divided up (Strachey's version of *zerlegen*) or (as the Macmillan translation has it) "dissected"? It is not quite clear even in "Repression" whether the second "element" is an element by virtue of having been split off from the first, or whether the first was from the beginning a combination. Since "quota of affect", was what the original *Vorstellung* was cathected by ("coming from an instinct"), we are not sure whether this second quota, which has achieved independence as an element, is simply a piece of the energy (or all of it) involved in the original cathexis or something that has come

into existence because of its relationship to the idea. The text says, "It [the element] corresponds to the instinct in so far as the latter has become detached from the idea and finds expression, proportionate to its quantity, in processes which are sensed as affects". "In so far as" [insofern] is especially a difficulty, because it implies either an independent action on the part of the instinct (as if, perhaps it had tired of that particular *Vorstellung* and has wandered away to express itself otherwise) or, possibly, a dependence *in* its expressive function, upon a separation between the instinct and its (associated?) idea. Does the second *emotional* representative come into play only *during*, or *as a result of* repression? If we adopt the latter hypothesis (to which there is no encouragement in Freud's text), do we also adopt the hypothesis that this process is a meaning-function? Is it simply the loss of one representation and the substitute of another that inspires the second "element" of representation, or is it the loss of accurate *meaning* that triggers the process?

As we have noticed, however, in "The Unconscious" Freud seems much less capable of dispensing, even this problematically, with "idea". A distinction between the expressions "unconscious instincts" and "unconscious affects" helps to develop a sense that in this essay Freud is willing to regard the idea as a meaning-expression of the ensemble of idea + affect. "In the first place", he explains, "it may happen that an affective or emotional impulse is perceived but misconstrued. Owing to a repression of its proper representative, it has been forced to become connected with another idea, and is now regarded by consciousness as the manifestation of that idea. If we restore the connection" – we suddenly recall that the affect was *never* unconscious: "all that happened was that its *idea* had undergone repression" (177-78).

It certainly seems from this account, however separate the "vicissitudes" suffered by affects due to repression – and Freud continues to stress these – that it is getting difficult to distinguish idea from affect. At the end of the section (iv) Freud remarks: "We have asserted [and here Strachey refers us to "Repression"] that in repression a severance takes place between the affect and the *idea to which it belongs*, and that each then undergoes its separate vicissitudes. Descriptively this is uncontrovertible; *in actuality*, however,

the affect does not as a rule arise till the break-through to a new representation in the system *Cs.* has been successfully achieved" (179; my italics). Not only are affect and idea becoming difficult to distinguish, even the difference between affect as representation and affect apart is beginning to crumble, for Freud seems to be suggesting that an instinct denied meaning-expression by the repression of one idea struggles to "break through" to renewed "representation". We may begin to wonder whether "in actuality" the quality of affect may not amount to little more than "meaning" the difference between a conscious idea and an unconscious idea which is somehow restored to consciousness. But if affect is made this contingent upon the restoration of connection to the "proper idea", the question of whether *Vorstellungen* – "ideational representatives" – are simply agents of instinctual energy or whether they represent *what they mean* returns with renewed force.

* * * * * *

> We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. The system *Ucs.* contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, the first and true object-cathexes... (S.E. 14.201)

This famous passage, by re-locating everything problematic in his conception in linguistic expression, is hardly reassuring. Even less so is Freud's bold production of schizophrenia as the arena where the distinction can most clearly be seen, since instances of this affliction are far enough beyond the usual analytic pale to make one wonder how exceptional the exception must be before it can no longer pass as the exception which proves the rule; "all observers", he tells us without any sense of strain, "have been struck with the fact that in schizophrenia a great deal is expressed as being conscious which in the transference neuroses can only be shown to be present in the *Ucs.* by psychoanalysis" (197). Further, by way of helpful clinical

aside, Freud produces two other patients (one of whom is certainly the Wolf-Man) to buttress his point. One of these performs his anxiety about onanism and consequent castration anxiety by squeezing out blackheads compulsively, and taking the resultant tiny cavities in his skin as substitutes for the vagina/sites of castration. Freud is bemused by the inappropriateness of the "tiny little cavity" to represent the vagina, and as well by the multiplicity of such sites, and he assures us that an ordinary neurotic would never indulge in such exaggeration (200). He adds a second example (borrowed from Tausk) where the patient's onanism is translated into obsessive dressing and undressing; in this case it is the rhythmic opening and closing of interstices in the patient's socks which convey the image of vagina. Again Freud is impressed that no "normal neurotic" could go so far, but then he remarks "that it is the predominance of what has to do with words over what has to do with things" that is decisive:

> As far as the thing goes, there is only a very slight similarity between squeezing out a blackhead and an emission from the penis, and still less similarity between the innumerable tiny pores of the skin and the vagina; but in the former case there is, in both instances, a 'spurting out', while in the latter the cynical saying, 'a hole is a hole', is true verbally. What has dictated the substitution is not the resemblance between the things denoted but the sameness of the words used to express them. Where the two – word and thing – do not coincide, the formation of substitutes in schizophrenia deviates from that in the transference neuroses. (200-01)

One can see how a translator might come to grief over this passage if we stop and ask ourselves what Freud can mean by "sameness of the words" as opposed to "resemblance of the things". Strachey, with his usual skill, renders Freud's *wörtlich* as "verbally", where the Macmillan translator, more unfortunately, has "literally". But there is really no way out of the "technical difficulties": Its aftermath, in German, is filled with *Wortvorstellungen* as opposed to *Sachvorstellungen*, and Strachey has a long footnote (201) explaining why *Vorstellung* here has to be "presentation" rather than (as usual) "idea", why he prefers "word presentation" and "object presentation" to the "somewhat misleading" "verbal idea" and "concrete idea". Few would quibble about "concrete idea" as a misleading usage, but

"word presentation" also manages to elude (without totally deserving to) the ambiguity inherent in *Wortvorstellung*.

A bit further on, it occurs to Freud to wonder how it is that the repression of schizophrenics managed to reach the object without at the same time reaching the word (a question which is even messier if we allow ourselves to wonder whether the word "means" the object or only signifies it), and produces as a response the suggestion that these patients' verbal behavior is not symptomatic of what they have lost, but of what they are trying to restore (still no help to us), adding that "when we think in abstractions there is a danger that we may neglect the relations of words to unconscious thing-presentations". But as against the danger that thinking abstractly may resemble psychosis is the dilemma that it is difficult to tell whether the blackhead-squeezer is best regarded as a verbalist (literalist?) or an abstractionist. In any case, there is a powerful linguistic/philosophical ambiguity already haunting the discusssion by the time Freud introduces Tausk's patient, who will remind us powerfully of Olympia in Hoffmann's story:

> A patient of Tausk's, a girl who was brought to the clinic after a quarrel with her lover, complained that *her eyes were not right, they were twisted.* This she herself explained by bringing forward a series of reproaches against her lover in coherent language. 'She could not understand him at all, he looked different every time; he was a hypocrite, an eye-twister, he had twisted her eyes; they were not her eyes any more; now she saw the world with different eyes.' (198; italics in original)

Freud is primarily interested at this point in what he and Tausk call the "organ speech" of the patient, her "schizophrenic word-formation" – i.e. her language expressing itself through the psychotic delusion of what has happened to her eyes – and he therefore is not at all surprised (since his characterization precludes it) by what seems to me a surprising confluence of delusional *performance* and a quite clear *interpretation* of that performance. This is clearly because Freud regards the patient's manifestation as totally verbal, i.e. not a performance at all. A more "normal" neurotic, i.e. an hysteric, would be a performer of her delusion, Freud tells us, she "would...have *in fact* convulsively twisted her eyes" (198), but this is different. He

does say, however, that "The patient's comments on her unintelligible remark have the value of an analysis, for they contain *the equivalent of the remark expressed in a generally comprehensible form*" (198; my italics).

In a second registration of the same patient, no less extraordinary, I want to emphasize Freud's own form of representation (like that of a novelist presenting a character); although Strachey changes the tenses slightly, with one exception he follows the German original closely, "indirecting" direct discourse as Freud's German does (while retaining quotation marks), yet maintaining a distinction between degrees of directness by recourse to italics:

> A second communication by the same patient was as follows: 'She was standing in church. Suddenly she felt a jerk; she had to *change her position, as though somebody was putting her into a position, as though she was put in a certain position.*'
>
> Now came the analysis of this through a series of fresh reproaches against her lover. 'He was common, he had made her common, too, though she was naturally refined. He had made her like himself by making her think he was superior to her; now she had become like him, because she thought she would be better if she were like him. *He had given a false impression of his position*; now she was just like him' (by identification), 'he had *put her in a false position*'. (198)

There is a small ambiguity in the original which Strachey – one assumes correctly – fixes by carefully removing the remark in parentheses from the patient's quotation marks. But this is intriguing from our point of view. The German has: "Er hat sich *verstellt*, sie ist jetzt so wie er (Identifizierung!), er hat sie *verstellt*" (GW x.297), which makes it slightly more difficult to tell whether the patient's "comprehensible" commentary also includes this clinical term, or whether it is Freud's interpolation. The point is of more than academic interest if we are willing to see that Freud's elaborate formatting, is itself almost as "stilted", "precious" and full of "peculiar care" as the speech of schizophrenics themselves.

I am not trying for dominance here. It is a familiar observation that Freud's accounts of clinical conditions often involve him in certain fantasmatic mergings with those conditions, and he himself at times takes notice of this (as at the end of Schreber essay: S.E. 12.79)

– and surely this is a measure of his astonishing ability to marry empathy to conceptualization – it is a familiar manifestation of his genius. What I do want to suggest, however, is that Tausk's patient – emerging from the problematics of "The Unconscious" as I have tried to describe them – in a way unnoticed by Freud (since irrelevant to his concerns) not only embodies but thematizes (and *in a way that makes it difficult to see quite where the one process leaves off and the other begins*) something of which Freud's theoretical difficulties are a repetition. The language which moves her performance (and surely, insofar as she is delusional, Tausk's patient's perceptions are as performative as Freud's hysteric who *unconsciously* jerked and rolled her eyes) towards an analytic account which *understands* (but apparently without that understanding having a *meaning*), can be seen to represent a quality of Freud's own theoretical prose. Those moments when his analytic discourse begs questions of foundationalism without knowing it seem on a profound level related to the verbal condition of Tausk's patient, and, as we will see, to Hoffmann's Olympia. My point is not that these manifestations are "insane", whatever that could mean in this context, but that they are related by a common subscription to what I call in the outline a generating matrix. It could as well be called a formal paradox, involving an aporia which inhabits the space between dramatism and explanatory narration. When it permeates his scientific imagery of "fact" and materiality, this paradox collapses into a kind of sign system analogous to fetishism, and indeed it might be argued that the earnest but "meaningless" communications of the schizophrenic in this example amount to fetishistic speech.

* * * * * *

Indeed, it is tempting to use this suggestion to begin forging the link between Freud's representational difficulties and the psychological fantasies we can discover in Hoffmann's psychological fiction. It is Freud himself who discovers this bridge in his remarks in a footnote to his essay "The Uncanny" (1919):

> This automatic doll [Olympia] can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy. Her fathers, Spalanzani and Coppola, are, after all, nothing but new editions, reincarnations of Nathaniel's pair of fathers... Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person, and Nathaniel's enslavement to this complex is expressed in his senseless obsessive love for Olympia. We may with justice call love of this kind narcissistic... (S.E. 17.232)

Only perhaps we should note our own leap of faith in this regard, for Freud never uses the term fetish (which would be more useful to ourselves since like certain of the representational ideas we are concerned with it is both memorially present and literally absent)[5], and he further strictly limits Nathaniel's feminine attitude toward his father to "his infancy", i.e. to the period of the primary oedipal formation. This is parallel to certain other omissions (and perhaps one error) in the essay which show Freud highly motivated to limit the period of Nathaniel's neurosis to his infantile fixations. Freud tends to "have eyes" in the story only for Nathaniel's infantile castration anxiety, and elements which pertain to his more "adult" neurosis, including his destruction of Clara and his suicide, tend to get short shrift – as indeed does the homosexual panic brought on by the proximity of marriage. Remarkably, when discussing the story's final scene, Freud ignores the fact that Nathaniel looks at Clara through his little telescope [Perspectiv] and imputes his murderous reaction to the recurrence in the same field of vision of the castrating father[6]. Indeed, the whole theme of vision in the story, so richly represented in voyeurism, in spying, in telescopes, in spectacles [Brillen] and broken glasses, is drawn severely back by Freud to the equation eyes=genitals; compare Stanley Cavell's quite contrary impulse to translate issues of "perspective" to the more general theme of philosophical scepticism, the lack of capacity to "see" what you

5 "Fetishism" (1927), S.E. 21.149-157; see also Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus", in *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, N.Y., W. W. Norton, 1985, pp. 74-85.

6 I refer to Hoffmann's German text in the Insel Taschenbuch edition, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1982, and in English to the Penguin translation by R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Viking-Penguin, 1982.

must see in order to survive as a viable subject[7]. The neglect of Nathaniel's murderousness, and of his suicide, is all the more remarkable when we recall that the essay was written, as Strachey points out, between two drafts of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, recapitulating that book's concern with the "compulsion to repeat", and that the first draft contains *no mention* of the "death instinct" which is surely the primary burden of the second (or final) draft! (S.E. 18.4).

The development of a fetish is indubitably a function of castration-anxiety, but I mean more than this generalization. Perhaps because in the essay Freud is over-committed to dispelling Jentsch's quite plausible rival explanation for uncanniness (intellectual uncertainty), he dispells as well the degree to which Hoffmann's story attempts to finesse Nathaniel's *sexual* uncertainty. But we can make the connection we seek, and include Stanley Cavell's interpretation into the bargain, if we connect the theme of eyesight not only to Nathaniel's genitals but to his "fetishistic" way of *seeing* (or wanting to be seen) as well. I take it that Nathaniel's position in the story amounts to his unconscious proposal that, no matter how magnified the gaze, so long as you *do not* see that there's *no* difference (I underline the double negative in order to align the syntax with rules of the unconscious)[8] between hetero- and homo-sexuality; one can get along quite nicely. But if you *do* see – a condition bringing in its wake the constant need to "test vision" – disaster must be the consequence. In this light, the story's attempt to bury its own grotesquerie in an atmosphere of urbanity, Nathaniel's delusions and Freud's narrowness of emphasis almost seem in collusion. Many details in the story attest to Nathaniel's homosexual dilemma – the relationship between his father and Coppelius which so distresses the mother at bedtime and which Nathaniel spies on as if it were a primal scene,

7 *In Quest of the Ordinary*, p. 157.

8 See "Negation" (1925), S.E. 19.235-239, and the commentary on it by Jean Hyppolite, in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book I (Freud's Papers on Technique), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester, N.Y., W. W. Norton, 1988, pp. 289-97.

the confusion of the address of his first letter in the story, the quite constant misogyny that accompanies all characterizations of Clara and Olympia – in which Freud is as little interested as the story apparently is.

That this is so is especially striking and engaging if we think of Freud, at the time of writing, as poised in some uncertainty between the conviction of his earlier career (wish-fulfillment) and the annunciation he is about to arrive at (the death-instinct), for Nathaniel's homophobic collapse so dramatically activates the latter. But though Freud ignores this (as he does Clara and the whole *Gestalt* of woman-as-victim), we perhaps need to recall that he would not be approaching Nathaniel as a "case" but only as a fantasy. Indeed, later he goes out of his way to distinguish the uncanny *in fiction* from the uncanny *in life*: *"in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and...there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life"* (S.E. 17.249; his italics). Perhaps it behooves us, therefore, to try to put our finger on a moment in Hoffmann's text where this apparently so obvious distinction frays. When we do so (for it can be done), it is not a little interesting that we find ourselves face-to-face with Nathaniel's motive for wanting to kill Clara.

"The Sandman" is of course a frame-story, and an epistolary fiction, and these fictional devices serve their usual purpose of rendering the fantastic more plausible. But Nathaniel is also himself a *writer*, and it is interesting that the authorial narrative voice allows the presumption that perhaps the surest sign of his insanity is the quality of the texts he produces and insists on reading to the long-suffering Clara. The story renders for us one of these:

> ...a poem: he depicted himself and Clara as united in true love; but now and then it was as if a black hand reached over them and erased their feelings of joy; at last, as they were standing before the marriage altar, the terrible Coppelius [the Sandman] appeared and touched Clara's lovely eyes, which sprang out like blood-red sparks, singeing and burning, on to Nathaniel's breast; Coppelius then seized him and threw him into a flaming circle of fire which, spinning with the velocity of a tempest, tore him away with a rushing and roaring... but through this commotion he heard Clara's voice: "...those

> were not my eyes which burned into your breast...I still have my eyes; you only have to look at me!"...Nathaniel looked into Clara's eyes, *but it was death which gazed at him mildly out of them.* (105; my italics)

This, I believe, is the only moment in the story where it is possible to mislay the conventions of narrative presentation, and to feel uncertainty whether the italicized remark emanates from Nathaniel's consciousness (and is his interpretation) or from his parent-narrator. We are not even sure (though we think we know) whether Clara's voice is in or out of the poem. It is a moment, I suggest, analogous to the "foundationalism" in the theoretical texts, where there is a corresponding slippage from fiction to "reality", and its paranoid association with death and with Nathaniel's later determination to strangle Clara seems in this context more than fortuitous.

To push the analogy further, I need to ask, in more focused fashion, whether the theoretical problematic of foundationalism resembles what Freud in "The Unconscious" calls "schizophrenic word-formation" and whether the performance of Hoffmann's narrative text – e.g. in the excerpt just quoted – resembles the dilemma of Tausk's patient, whether in particular the italicized passage is analogous (on the part of textspeech) to "organ speech" (on the part of the schizophrenic girl), where the vehicle of a metaphor is given literal life. Let us recall in this last connection the distinction Freud draws between Tausk's patient and the more "normal" hysteric: "a hysterical woman would...have *in fact* convulsively twisted her eyes, and . . . have given actual jerks, instead of having the *impulse* to do so or the *sensation* of doing so: and in neither example would she have any accompanying conscious thoughts, nor would she have been able to express any such thoughts afterwards" (S.E. 14.198-99). If we focus the analogy on "The Sandman" as a text, as if a text were its own agency (i.e. ignoring the other agencies potentially present) – as I believe we are progressively constrained to do – we are left with such imponderable questions as whether particular representations are closer to *facts* (and jerks!) or to *impulses* and *sensations.* This question may hint that Freud's own distinction between psychic states is open to question, or at least becoming hard to express, and indeed earlier I have already suggested that it is

harder "on the page" to distinguish *hysterical* (unconscious) performance from *schizophrenic* (verbalized but "unmeaning") interpretation than the passage claims.

I believe, again, that the difficulty here reflects a conundrum in the relationship between the ideas of performance (or dramatized "realization") and narrated representation, and that while this is a larger problem than can be solved in a brief essay, we can more clearly see its nature if we look again at the fiction of "The Sandman" with this in mind, trying to recall the story as if it were its own representation, so to speak, rather than the representation *of* a story or *of* its author/narrator's intentionality. Since I believe "The Sandman" to be a derivative of *Hamlet*, I will shadow this brief analysis with parallels from that play, as its archetype. The burden of both will remain the same, that the effect of foundationalism/schizophrenia is a function of a certain ambiguous transfer of responsibility for expression between dramatization (objectivization in drama implies the repression of a previously arrived at understanding, or "script") and narrated interpretation (which implies the "presence" of an understanding subjectivity). Products of the unconscious, like dreams, of course, are also forms of this transfer – but they are meaningless until subjected to interpretation – and we are accustomed (in Lacan) to the notion that the interpretation (because it occurs in language) is responsible for the phenomenon. But perhaps we encounter something in Freud's texts which is neither the represented unconscious phenomenon nor its interpretation but a kind of aporia resting within the disjunction between dramatization and narration.

This "aporia", I believe, is the foundation of the Freudian field; it is not quite the case that it has its being only in texts, rather let us say only "in reading", because we refer to something conveyed through texts (and in speech) which is more than language can bear. There is not space here adequately to theorize the capacity for expression I am assuming, but I hope at least it is arguable that "narrating/interpreting" on the one hand and "dramatizing/acting out" on the other are not members of the sort of expressive dualism usually put at the service of a totalizing theory of meaning. In terms of a de Manian understanding of reading, for instance, I would resist attributing grammar to narrative and rhetoric to dramatic perform-

ance[9]. I spoke earlier of a "generating matrix", but I did not mean by that *the* generating matrix (of literature in general), and my instinct here is to resist ontological claims altogether, even in the form of implying that this aporia "is" the unconscious. It is difficult, especially perhaps since the assimilation of Lacan into the rest of our rhetorical equipment, to resist this degree of ontological assumption about the unconscious, even (or perhaps especially when) it is radicalized as the "outside" of meaning or understanding. But Freud began with an understanding of sexuality as something anomalous to the rest of experience, and ontologizing its effects in the totalizing way that has become customary has at minimum the effect of blunting therapeutic possibility.

This might be especially important to remember if we surmise that the struggle to "totalize" whatever it is in experience that corresponds to the slippage or aporia discussed here may be partly responsible for the violent distress with the feminine that crops up in one form or another in all the texts and experiences we have been discussing. In human experience of biology, after all, woman is not a member of a dualism (since all human beings of both genders are born of woman), but Freud's uncertainty about the version of the Oedipus-complex experienced by women applied paradoxical stress to his determination not to gender instinct as if she were. However, since "penis envy" is his not-exactly-felicitous monument to this determination, it is hardly surprising that the tendency of paternal metaphoricities to organize themselves in dualistic meaning-systems

9 "Semiology and Rhetoric", in *Allegories of Reading*, by Paul de Man, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 3-19. De Man's critical terminology in this essay interests me a lot, as when, speaking of a key passage in Proust, he remarks (p. 13): "The example differs from the earlier ones in that we are not dealing with a grammatical structure that also functions rhetorically but have instead the *representation, the dramatization*, in terms of the experience of a subject, of a rhetorical structure – just as, in many other passages, Proust *dramatizes* tropes by means of landscapes or *descriptions of objects*. The figure here *dramatized* is that of metaphor, an inside/outside correspondence as represented by the act of reading" (italics added).

which seek to make exhaustive ontological claims are currently understood to be "phallogocentric". But Freud's odd pronouncements about the phallus may seem both more humane and understandable if we associate them with "organ speech", not because they are psychotic but because they may represent a frantic, and as it were "foundational" (male) escape, not from woman as "other" so much as from an aporia to which even woman-as-other seems a fatally attractive alternative.

As deployed narratives, both "The Sandman" and *Hamlet* organize themselves into three "stages", stages which appear to constitute a meditation on subjectivity-objectivity, and it seems to be the relationship among these stages – definitely non- or extra-dialectical – which conveys the "aporia" in question. In "The Sandman" these are:

(1) The scene of intense subjective voyeurism, where Nathaniel, as a child behind the arras spies on his father and the alchemist Coppelius. This scene has all the earmarks of a primal scene, as is symbolized by the fact that discovery evokes, on the part of Coppelius, the castration-threat (gouging the child's eyes out, and unscrewing his appendages). The father in this fantasy is presented as a successful mediator on behalf of the child, but it is noteworthy that a repetition of the scene – from which Nathaniel absents himself – produces the father's death. In terms of the homosexual element of the story, from which Freud tends to draw back, it is worth considering that Nathaniel's bursting through the arras into a scene of castration may in fact be a wish-fulfillment: clearly a presentiment of later "break-throughs" which represent the death-drive (e.g. his suicide leap at the end), it may also represent a self-presentation *for* castration (or death as an exalted re-birth).

(2) The repetition (in a sense) of this scene, where Nathaniel, overhearing behind a door a passionate argument between Coppola and Spalanzani (both father-imagos, recapitulating a primal encounter) bursts through to discover them dismembering the doll Olympia. Since we know Olympia's mechanical status and what she represents psychologically for Nathaniel – the personification of a fetish – we can see that this scene represents a considerable complication in terms of subjectivity. To put things in the form of a simple question: should we consider Nathaniel rushing to the rescue of his fetishized

feminine element an advance towards "objectivity" or a further stage of deterioration (self-division)? The return of Olympia's "eyes" to Nathaniel (which has an interesting counterpart in the biography of Shelley during the period *Frankenstein* was conceived by his wife)[10] is likewise psychologically ambivalent in that it presumably underlines that his sexual object has all along been endowed with his own genital equipment.

(3) The final scene of the story, on the tower, is a terrible repetition-fulfillment of the two earlier scenes. In this instance Nathaniel is himself behind the door (and on top of the tower) wrestling with Clara – a re-realization of the second scene, in short, but seen from without (total objectification) – and Lothar (a Nathaniel-double but thoroughly externalized) bursts through the door to rescue Clara. Lothar, who duelled earlier with Nathaniel (about Clara), is the story's highly repressed homosexual object, but his insertion into this scene has no psychological function, since he lacks both a represented subjectivity of his own and sexual object-status. He is powerless to prevent Nathaniel's final abandonment of himself – an event to which the story denies all subjectivity – and the death of Nathaniel is now precipitated and observed from an entirely objective and dispassionate perspective. In fact, this seems partly what is symbolized by the telescope [Perspectiv], since this instrument all along directs Nathaniel's sexual subjectivity towards the homophobic self-awareness that proves fatal, but it does this by making him the object rather than the subject of view. Indeed, if the telescope "belongs" to anyone, it belongs to the castrating agent.

In *Hamlet* (1) would be the staging of the mousetrap, wherein Hamlet hopes to catch the conscience of the king. It is from the perspective of my interest fascinating that the scene represented

10 Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, N.Y., E. P. Dutton, 1975, pp. 327-29. After listening to a recitation, by Byron, of "Christabel", Shelley had an hysterical seizure during which he became obsessed with the idea of his wife's breasts bearing eyes rather than nipples, an idea coincident with recollection of his efforts to promote a sexual relationship between his wife and his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg.

(where Hamlet's father is shown poisoned through his *ear* while sleeping) can be thought of as a complex "translation" of a primal scene[11] and that it should be dually represented – as a dumbshow (performed without words) and as a drama. The point of view of this scene aligns *Hamlet*'s audience not with the audience of the mousetrap but with the character Hamlet's voyeurism of Claudius. The implication of this, especially considering his bad behavior towards Ophelia during the scene, is that behind Hamlet's preoccupation with his mother's pleasure in Claudius is an identification, on more than one level, with Claudius's relationship to his father. (2) the scene that obviously corresponds to the vacillation between subjectivity and objectivity in "The Sandman" is the scene in *Hamlet* where the hero encounters his mother (as it were) sexually, and is stymied by re-realization of her sexual relation to Claudius and by the frankness of her question, which brings their oedipal relation to a kind of point, "What shall I do?" Hamlet's "subjectivity" is realized by his stabbing the faux father-substitute, Polonius (caught catching the oedipal son in the very act), as well as by his psychological pondering, and (in more complex fashion) by his reversed representation of what must originally be a scene of voyeurism where *he* would have been observing his mother and her lover, the father, from behind the arras. In a similar complexity his murder of Polonius can be read as a repetition of Claudius's crime, a buried intention disinterred when he greets the arrival of his father's ghost with a phrase appropriate to the former: "A king of shreds and patches". His "objectivity" in the scene is represented of course by the fact that he seems to be able to *be* present subjectively only if he is under observation: it is interesting that immediately after the death of Polonius the ghost must re-enter. (3) Hamlet's final "objectification" is accomplished, obviously, in the culminating scene of his duel with Laertes and subsequent death, together with Claudius and Gertrude. The formal significance of this scene is powerfully represented by the stage-direction which repeatedly refers to the duel as "play", as if indeed it represented the final objectification of the entire drama, as

11 Cavell, "Hamlet's Burden of Proof", pp. 184-185.

well as by the device of suggesting that in the last analysis Hamlet's conflict is with himself (since Laertes, the other bereaved son, is an obvious double). Just as in "The Sandman" a tone of sophisticated urbane enjoyment sweeps by Nathaniel's death in order to register comic satisfaction in the bourgeois banalities of Clara's subsequent marriage, the tone of tragedy in *Hamlet* is almost as immediately curiously mitigated by Horatio: "purposes mistook / Fallen on the inventors' heads". Neither case, it seems, bears thinking about.

It is arguable that the middle stage of both series is the most interesting, since it presents the subject in a mixed mode of subjectivity and objectivity, which seems a fictional recapitulation of Freud's "literary" representation of Tausk's patient's *self*-representation. There is plenty in Freud's theorizations with which to reinforce this observation, e.g. his development of a grammatical "reflexive middle voice" in his essay on instinct transformations ("Instincts and Their Vicissitudes", S.E. 14.128) and, in "A Child Is Being Beaten" his discovery of a totally repressed passive masochistic fantasy lying between two more objective scenes available to consciousness (S.E. 17.175-20, an essay belonging to the same alembic which produced *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and "The Uncanny"). However, the temptation to allow a "grammatical" description as explanation is one I want to resist, though it is obviously highly significant that the terms "active" and "passive" are assigned to sexual designations as well as to parts of speech. Even so, Freud often argues strenuously against gendering instinct psychology (e.g. in the conclusion to "A Child Is Being Beaten"), and indeed goes out of his way to remind the reader that the phrase "in the male fantasy" should not be used in an essentializing way (S.E. 17.198) – though this is a scrupulosity he seems less concerned with vis-à-vis the equation feminine=passive.

When Tausk's patient, in the passage from "The Unconscious" quoted above, is summarized as thinking about her lover, "'He had *given a false impression of his position*; now she was just like him' (by identification), 'he had *put her in a false position*'". (S.E. 14.198), Freud may have had in mind Tausk's position, in "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia" that the girl's Identification with her "persecutor" was "a kind of intermediary position between the feeling of self-estrangement and the delusion of refer-

ence [to the persecuting "machine"]"[12] – and it makes sense to see the relationship between this "intermediary position" and the central scenes of the two sequences of three I have outlined above. Not least is this interesting because it suggests that the story or play is itself functioning as if it were, autonomously, a psychic apparatus, rather than merely the function of an author or reader. But if this introduces a mysticism better to be avoided, by the same token I want to resist the reduction of what is happening to totalizing grammar or logic. Freud's account, I would suggest, is so much more interesting than Tausk's because, without attempting reflection on the fact, it reproduces something in the original phenomenon manifest in an *imponderable* relation between interpretive narration and verbalized performance. Tausk's patient's performance of her condition in the production of an interpretation she does not understand represents the conclusion of any sensible generic distinction between mimesis and diegesis.

When Freud remarks in the same essay that "by being linked with words, cathexes can be provided with quality even when they represent only *relations* between presentations of objects and are thus unable to derive any quality from perceptions" (202), the intriguing word "quality" may engage us justifiably quite as much as "relations" already has (via Lacan). We may find it is subject to at least as much elasticity as the interstices of the socks belonging to Freud's psychotic patient. "Such relations, which become comprehensible only through words, form a major part of our thought-processes", Freud assures us – and in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he extends this observation to include the idea that without such foundationalism "we could not otherwise describe the [psychological] processes in question at all, *and indeed we could not have become aware of them*" (S.E. 18.60; my italics) – but perhaps it is time to overcome the scandal of observing this, which was perfectly obvious to Freud himself from the beginning, and move on to

12 In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, ed. Peter Buckley, New York and London, New York University Press, 1988, p. 53.

observing something more interesting: that the language he uses to "represent" Tausk's patient represents at the same time a complete impasse in the division of labor between distinct expressive genres.

We may hypothesize, therefore, that Freud's eloquent accounts of all the neurotic positions he describes represent a successful literarization of the forces at work, and that the psychotic position which lies at the border of his effectiveness marks also one limit of literary representation. We can suggest, further, if we do not yet understand why, nor *formally* the role of gender in it, that this "limit" to Freud's expressivity may really be the clue to its source. Freud's textual power, the power of his *reading*, this would imply, would be "beyond literature", but of course the ultimate discovery of this would be the degree to which *relevant* literary expression was always "beyond literature" in the first place, something all our busyness to people it with points of view and intentionalities was from the beginning designed to deny.

If we return from this hypothesis to the text of *Hamlet*, it is interesting to discover that some of its weirdest articulations may correspond to the broader definition of "organ speech" we have derived from Freud and Hoffmann. Consider that Hamlet (indeed the whole play) should frequently resort to puns like the following: (Hamlet to Gertrude in the bedroom) "This was your husband. Look you now what follows. / Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear / Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?" Is this not – especially considering the dumbshow – "organ speech"? In fact, Hamlet's speech is riddled with it, in every sense, and even such famous cruces as –

> Rosencrantz: My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.
> Hamlet: The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing –
> Rosencrantz: A thing my lord?
> Hamlet: Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after!

– speak this dialect as well as Tausk's patient, as Hoffmann's story, and as Freud's theoretical language do.

Résumé

Ce qui rend difficile l'approche "herméneutique" de Freud est la nécessité dans laquelle se trouvent le maître viennois comme ses lecteurs de traiter les "fictions" métaphoriques de son discours comme des entités autonomes. Freud lui-même, dans *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, décrit audacieusement cette procédure fondatrice comme étant en parfait accord avec sa discipline. Mon article cerne les implications de sa pratique dans quelques-uns des passages les plus hallucinants de "The Unconscious" (1915). Le but de cet article, toutefois, n'est pas de mettre en cause la pratique de Freud mais de tirer des parallèles entre celle-ci et certains "événements" mis en scènes et/ou thématisés dans le *Sandman* de E.T.A. Hoffmann. L'article formule comme hypothèse l'existence d'une matrice générative qui agit simultanément dans le cas de la problématique fondatrice des textes théoriques de Freud et dans certains textes littéraires dans lesquels sont représentés des phénomènes psychiques. On y suggère que la force de cette matrice est fonction d'une aporie spécialisée qui vient faire échouer une coopération éventuelle entre, d'une part, les fonctions de narration et d'interprétation et, de l'autre, celles de représentation et d'expression dramatique. Cette aporie semble avoir une affinité avec l'inconscient lorsque celui-ci vit, trahit, exprime ("acts out"), souvent violemment, des tentatives manquées de le contenir.