

## Willy Apollon

### *What's at Stake in the Freudian Clinic*

#### **Freud and the Trap of the Case History**

It has often been pointed out that case histories do not abound in the *Écrits* of Jacques Lacan (Paris: Seuil, 1966). In most instances, this statement is used to justify criticism of Lacan as a theoretician whose clinical contribution is not obvious. In America we generally glory in a clinical pragmatism that claims to dispense with any sort of "theoretical contribution," and we judge the latter to be a useless luxury or, at best, an aesthetic indulgence.

It often seems important, if not necessary to the "understanding" of practice (what we call the clinic), that a case should be reported session by session with historical precision. Some sort of "what happened during the session" appears to afford a guarantee of the clinical stances adopted and to justify the clinician's interventions. Everything occurs, then, as if the psychoanalytic clinic were obliged to bend to the norms of experimental science. In this way, the reporting of the case history would conjure the illusion of a rigorous technical or clinical approach, in which everything purporting to be theoretical would rest on a basis of clinical verification. The intention is laudable. But such intent takes no account of what Freud invented in his practice, where by any standard one may not speak of clinical experience in the sense that a rerun of the conditions would allow the validity of the results to be checked. Psychoanalytic experience is distinguished by a singularity which renders it, of necessity, unique.

Even Freud's position differed markedly, it seems. From his entire clinical practice he has left only a few exemplary cases, which, taken together, do not amount to much over a fifty-year period. Freud warns us repeatedly that he is only giving fragmentary reports based on notes

taken on the evening after the sessions, and never during the sessions. In the case of the Rat Man, he states he is reporting the first seven sessions almost verbatim. Keeping in mind what he says about his practice, we may surmise that the "verbatim" refers only to his notes and not to the statements of the patient himself. In fact, Freud imposes on himself the rule of pure recollection (*remémoration*) (the psychical work of what has been heard, as against what might have been lived out), and in so doing inserts the process of the treatment in the Symbolic field of language. For Freud, what must guide the treatment is his own desire. Furthermore, he limits himself to what his own desire-to-know, his desire as analyst, retains of the session.

Contrary to what goes on all too often in those case accounts which are *supposed* to be clinical, Freud is not dealing with problems of self-justification. The case report, like the patient's discourse, can be constituted according to the account's structure, as a narcissistic montage where the hero is the clinician, and the villain is either the symptom or the patient himself, with all the accessories proper to narrative structure in tales and myths. At the stylistic level, it may not lack for artfulness nor for rhetorical subtlety of suggestion. The analysis or presentation of the case can be, therefore, a literary or psychological essay, which is clinical only in its quotation of the patient's discourse or the rigor of the clinician's observations. What Freud makes out of the clinical case seems quite different to us. just as he directs his attention to what

comes to him from the patient's unconscious (as we shall see in the Rat Man), so he makes his clinical case-report only on the basis of what comes back to him from the session retroactively, according to the direction imposed on the session by his own desire-to-know. And so the Freudian clinic teaches us as much about the surfacing of unconscious representations and their interlinkage throughout the treatment, as about Freud's desire-to-know and the consequent direction of his reshaping unconscious productions.

Freud seems to have brought this concept of the clinic to the *ne plus ultra* of the navel of the dream, and what he taught us to pin down as the unknowable: what will never reach the subject's consciousness from the unconscious. In place of this unanalysable frontier, this rock on which all analyses in Freud founder (and which seems always to be the inaccessible object of his desire-to-know), Freud substitutes the concept of the Father. For Freud, the father would guarantee a meaning when what comes from the Other scene [*ein anderer Schauplatz*]

fails to become symbolized in the patient's discourse. In his analysis of neurosis, Lacan makes the fragility of this solution apparent when faced with the ineffable and the unanalysable. The clinical creation of Jacques Lacan is to be found beside the reef on which the Freudian clinic runs aground. Lacan designates the technical stakes in the clinic at the point where Freud left off: 1) by his concept of the Real (in order to give some account of that Real which resists Freud's desire-to-know), 2) by his concept of the Name-of-the-Father (in order to usher in the fragility and arbitrariness of the father invoked by Freud), and 3) with his concept of the objet *a* as the cause of the desire of the Other, where the Real of the Other's *jouissance* returns as incapable of being symbolized.

### **Lacan and the Ethical Stake in the Clinic**

What characterizes Jacques Lacan's position is his return of Freud's invention to its ethical dimension. Analysis is an act, then, and is situated in the realm of action. Its foremost concern, furthermore, will be the conditions under which the analytic act is possible on the one hand, and, on the other, the conditions for its transmission via the training of analysts. Viewed in this manner, analysis is not first and foremost a means of knowledge. It is not a way for the analyst to know the patient, nor is it a way for the analysand to know himself. We are far from any problematics of intervention based on a familiarity or understanding which one may have with patients. The ethical problematics reintroduced by Lacan take up the question of "knowing" as the desire of Freud eavesdropping on the unconscious. Such a position cancels out any stake of knowledge which may be applied to the psychic apparatus perceived as an object to be known.

If Lacanians have a preference for the concept of analysis, rather than that of psychoanalysis, this is not a piece of intellectual swagger. It is a clinical stake. Is there a psychic apparatus to be analysed, or to be "therapied"? Are we facing an object to be known and over whose dysfunctions we might exert some power of therapeutic action? Or are we, rather, faced by a subject's discourse laced with the speech of an Other that reveals itself unbeknownst to the subject (not necessarily just in psychosis)? Indeed, the type of question posed determines the type of clinical action. In the first case the psychic apparatus is the object of knowledge. The ego (*moi*) is its model *par excellence*. The clinical case account sets forth the ups and downs of its development,

its impasses, its failures and the exploits of the heroes—psychoanalysts and psychoanalysed—against the symptoms. The cure is set up, therefore, as a relationship between the "therapist" and the patient which determines the meaning of the transference, as well as the modalities of analytic intervention and interpretive strategies.

From the second viewpoint, a Lacanian one, the clinic confronts the Real, that frontier of the impossible where Freud invokes the father as threshold and guardian of meaning. The Real confronts the ineffable which throws the subject's entire universe into question from an Other place. The business of the analyst is with this Real on which the desire of Freud founders. In so doing the analyst assumes the master's post, but by what means? How is he going to re-engage Freud's act and maintain its effectiveness and clinical scope? The interest of Jacques Lacan is undoubtedly to have blazed a theoretical and clinical trail in response to these questions. Lacan re-engaged Freud's act under different epistemological and cultural conditions, in another language and another historical era, yet maintains its keenness and accuracy for an age which is not that of Freud's invention. But, at the same time, he determines the conditions for such a re-engagement and such a fidelity. Lacan posits the stakes in the transmission of psychoanalysis, then, under other conditions than those of its creation by Freud. Therein lies his greatest interest for us today. Psychoanalysis will continue to exist if psychoanalysts can reinvent it amid other epistemological conditions and practices than those of Freud, while remaining faithful to the ethics and the act invented by Freud. Lacan has made such a gesture possible.

It is not, indeed, self-evident that so singular an invention, resting in such radical fashion on the desire which promotes it, can be transmitted to other cultures, other languages, and other epistemological conditions and practices. Lacan accomplishes this work of transmission and analyses the conditions for its possibility in an advanced post-industrial society, where the question of the foundations of authority can no longer be posed in the terms of *Totem and Taboo*, that is, around the question of the father. How can the analyst today and "elsewhere" re-engage the clinical act of Freud, and produce the unconscious as a discourse spoken from an Other scene than that of consciousness without deviating from its unconscious desire? In the wager of sustaining a post-Freud while remaining faithful to the singularity of Freud's discovery, Lacan reveals himself as a master whose pertinence can be measured by the effects of his practice.

And so, rereading Freud with the concerns of today, we find in Lacan a guide who has preceded us on the path of freedom and precision in the maintenance of the Freudian clinic. This line may be defined by an ethics of desire in the analyst, where the analysand finds a support for his own demand to know, which brings him up to the point of blockage where his search is resolved in the object of the phantasy that structures his desire. We shall endeavor to follow the stakes in Lacan's rethinking the clinic by looking at Freud's work with the Rat Man.

### **The Rat Man: A Pretext**

One cannot, of course, occupy Freud's place to quiz his clinical actions. The articulation of the desire-to-know in Freud vis-à-vis the object invested with unconscious representations is the Rat

Man. The divergences between what the analyst does, says or writes about are too particular to form the object of a critically objective examination. But it is interesting to interrogate his technique as we may grasp it in his text. On the other hand, it is not a matter of justifying a Lacanian reading of Freud. We are inquiring, rather, into the foundations of the technique which Lacan extracted from Freud's text.

The notes which Freud says he took on the evening of each day, after the sessions and not during the sessions, notes (which unlike the majority of the others were not destroyed by Freud), seem more spontaneous and less elaborate than the "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" published later. The edition published by the Presses Universitaires de France: Sigmund Freud, *L'Homme aux rats: Journal d'une analyse* reproduces the German text opposite the French translation, and is accompanied by the Translator's Notes and those of the author. In a Lacanian approach, it is important to follow Freud through the sequence of signifiers which he extracts from the patient's discourse in order to grasp its interlinkage. To follow the thread, then, it would be in the reader's interest to refer to Freud's incomplete diary published under the title *Addendum: Original Record of the Case* (translation 1955), or to the "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," in the Standard Edition, vol. X. Stuart Schneiderman's *The Rat Man* (New York: NYU Press, 1987) proves an indispensable addition for studying the Freudian clinic within the problematics opened up by Jacques Lacan. While Freud tells us he accomplished this cure in a year, with complete recovery of the patient's personality and the disappearance of his inhibitions, today we would be surprised by such speedy success. Rather, let us linger over Freud's technique and what

motivates it. Since the important thing is to begin Freud's act over, we must rediscover its principles.

### **Symbolic, Imaginary and Real Needs, or A Certain Idea of the Real**

The concept of the Real as used by Jacques Lacan's pupils is not without ambiguity for those who have no access to the clinic to explain it through Lacanian practice. Usually the Real is assimilated to the concept of need, taken in a sense whose value is not clear for analytic practice. But we could take this confusion as a starting-point. Lacan approaches matters askew via his remarks on need. The definition of need which forces itself on analytical practice is somewhat distant from any psychosocial or medical consideration of the same concept. For the purposes of this article, we shall give a minimal definition of need as it takes on meaning in the Lacanian clinic. Need is a physiological lack, the non-satisfaction of which would entail the death of the living person. Some examples would be the need for water, food, or nitrogen. Need finds its object in nature, and the consumption of the object of need leads to satisfaction. Freud points out that this, so to speak, natural satisfaction could be wished for by the infant—the one who does not yet speak (Lat. *in-fans*)—totally and immediately. If this total and immediate satisfaction were possible, it would doubtless be what is encompassed in the particular concept of *jouissance*.

But such a conceivable trajectory from need to its object and then to *jouissance*, which would typify the fate of need for a living being, is precisely what language makes impossible for a speaking being. The entire cultural order of symbols are interpreted by language which places a

burden on community life, turning need's trajectory into a realm from which any being is exiled from the start. Culture is by definition that set of values and symbols which rip us out of the sphere of need, away from the natural object and immediate and total satisfaction, plunging us into a quite different adventure, viz. the desire for something else. Culture—as stimulated or regulated by language—becomes an impassable barrier which places the object out of bounds, as well as the satisfaction it supposes. This beyond-meaning or beyond-language (where *jouissance* is excluded) aptly defines the space of the impossible which Lacan calls the Real and where he posits the stakes of desire.

One can see on the one hand the basic connection between such an idea and what Freud set in place with his notion of castration. But the important thing here is to extract a few observations and technical

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precautions from it concerning the aim of analysis and the action of the analyst who must not see drive as a manifestation of need. What seems Real, or like an agonizing beyond-meaning for the subject as prisoner of language, cannot be problematized in categories such as frustration or affective reaction. By following this route, interpretation can only go astray. Analysts, in rushing to the aid of suffering they think they have the power to heal, abandon the stakes and scope of their techniques.

Indeed analysts, must clearly see the impossible which—by the fact of language—impacts on the anticipated *jouissance* of the speaking, sexed subject; and see also that the object of need can be missing in reality. Analytic action does not deal with the reality of need in a patient's lived experience. It tends, rather, to surround that other lack by which language replicates the physiological lack called need. Symbolic lack forms a hollow on the hither side of the lack called need which, so to speak, exiles the subject from the necessities of life and thrusts him into the midst of the demands and Symbolic stakes peculiar to his culture. Such is the fundamental trauma around which the analyst's ethical action is threaded. The debt, the out-standing payment which gnaws away at the Rat Man's existence finds no relief whatsoever in any concern or kindly word from Freud regarding the Rat Man's affects. What consumes Freud is reconstituting the chain of unconscious representations which surround this debt to the point of insisting on its cancellation.

The Lacanian clinic places the analyst's action outside the realm of medical attention characteristic of doctors. The analyst does not attend. He is guided in his action by an ethics of lack, a lack hollowed out by the fact of civilization, and which cannot be filled. Freud insists on this point over and over again, and not just in *Civilization and its Discontents*. In the course of treatment such ethics surround the passage from jeopardized satisfaction, to a lack in speech; from a lack to be filled, to a lack to be signified; from the absence of an object, to a lack of a signifier. Hence the attention that Lacanian analysts pay during treatment to the signifier as the ethical underpinning of a "deliberate inaction" (*abstention*) concerning affect.

### **Demand: A Symbolic Order of Other Claims**

But the subject does not deal directly with the Symbolic structure of culture. It is via the claims and speech of the Other, parental figures, spouse, lovers, authorities and friends, that the subject meets that

place that is other where demand is stimulated both for him and within him. Clinical experience provides us with this elsewhere as proof of a different discourse which impregnates the discourse of the patient, often unbeknownst to him. Freud stresses with precision the way in which, after the moment of the cruel Captain's story, something else would loom forth for the Rat Man: an imperative. "One had to admit," wrote Freud, "that we were dealing with a complex-ridden sensitivity and that, through the captain's words, some hypersensitive points of the sick man's unconscious had been rudely affected."

But, yet again, for the subject his own speech is a message, as much as is the speech of the Other. It is in this way that, for the subject, speech—be it his own or not—is produced from an Other place than that of his consciousness, a fact attested to for Freud by dreams, slips of the pen or tongue, and jokes (see Lacan's *Écrits*, p. 634). The analysand is surprised to hear himself saying during the session what he did not intend to say and, moreover, what he did not know he knew. The mere presence of the analyst creates a situation of transference and conjures up for the analysand that other dimension of the unconscious which Lacan defines as the "discourse of the Other," thus describing the exact experience of which the Rat Man bears witness to Freud in the course of the second session. There he goes over the punitive impulses which are assuming shape within him, as well as the commands which fight against these impulses in his mind. This other dimension, which overdetermines our action as analysts, occupies the place of a Third. An Other is involved, beyond the simple relationship of the analyst and the analysand. The place of the Third Party conditions the "truth" of the subject's speech, to the degree that—in clinical experience—this truth does not refer the patient's discourse to a lived reality but, rather, to that Other which determines what is enunciated. For the Rat Man, the cruel Captain takes on this dimension of Third Party at a given juncture. Such conflicting imperatives as "You will now, this very instant, stick a knife in your throat." And, "You will not give in, at any time, to an obsessive impulse . . ." (which the Rat Man experiences as obsessions, or intrusions by an Other) take on the form for psychotics of voices and verbal injunctions.

Thus the field of demand is opened up, where need loses some of its impact on the lived experience and concrete existence of the subject. It is the discourse of the Other, now, which assumes disproportionate room and, in extreme cases, *all* the room during the intensest phases of

neurosis, confronting the subject with pressures which bear no relation to the reality of experience. The session of Friday, October 4 is enlightening on this point. We witness the Rat Man embark on a whole set of reasonings and calculations based on his Imaginary concerns for the debt he is to repay, as well as procedures which, in reality, necessarily render this same payment of debt impossible: all of which illustrates, almost in caricature, Jacques Lacan's formula concerning the obsessional's desire: "the desire for an impossible desire."

Freud's concern does not bear so much at this juncture on the Rat Man's pain, nor on a consolidation of his subjective position, or ego, with respect to his obsessions, but rather on the connection Freud maintains with the commands and punitive impulses taking shape inside him. The Other's discourse, which introduces the patient to the notion of splitting, is just exactly the subject of Freud's intervention: 1) in order to attenuate his term "disintegration of the

personality" and substitute for it the term "splitting," and 2) in order to refer it to what belongs to the order of infantilism in him, as one characteristic of the unconscious. And it is these representations proceeding from an Other scene, these signifiers of the Other's discourse, which become the working material through which Freud guides the Rat Man from the end of the fifth session onwards. Only then does it appear that the "interlinkage of thoughts" which Freud's interpretation renders accessible to the Rat Man actually surrounds a repugnant wish: "that his father might die." From which the analyst concludes: "A single problem remains: where does this hatred come from?"

The work done in the October 8 session led to the discovery of how the unconscious representations which conditioned such a desire were organized. It is obvious that it is a matter of a death wish only for Freud. The Rat Man's entire psychic structure, we could say, consists precisely in making such a desire impossible. Indeed, this *jouissance* of the Other which we see being elaborated for the Rat Man's Imaginary in his screen memories of sexual "adventures," First with his maids, then with his "ladies," or in what horrifies him during visits to prostitutes is rendered inaccessible and impossible by the chain of representations organized around the cruel Captain's story. The paths along which Freud guides his patient in search of unconscious representations structuring his unconscious desire exemplify, in this case, the principles of the direction of the treatment, as Lacan set them up in his essay "The Direction of the Treatment" (*Écrits*, pp. 585-645).

### **Is Desire the Imaginary of an Individual Place?**

The Rat Man—an exile in his own skin—can only *imagine* his life as a prisoner of various unconscious representational chains: connected with a woman's naked body, or the rats in the torture, or with the debt, all three of them chains which link up with the repugnant wish for his own father's death. It is from this Imaginary place that he attempts to tie together an existence which has become the Real for him (one from which he has been appropriately expelled), as well as those linkages of thoughts which force themselves on him much more than what might be termed the constraints of reality does or experience. Through his problematics of the Borromean knot, Lacan offers the clinician a technical instrument different from analysis or ego reinforcement with which to listen to the patient and guide the treatment amid all the muddle. The Rat Man cannot make head or tail of things in his efforts to tie together Imaginarily the chains of signifiers surrounding simultaneously impossible, fascinating or revolting objects such as—in the first place—the naked bodies of women, or the rats in the Imaginary place of the torture narrated by the cruel Captain, or the Symbolic debt which seems quite impossible to pay, and last but not least—at the center of the knot of the three signifying chains—the wished-for death of the father.

If unconscious desire (which Lacan uses to recenter Freud's whole clinic) is what structures the patient's Imaginary, in following Freud's actions throughout the eighth to tenth beginning sessions with the Rat Man, we remain surprised by this technique where, thanks to an ordering of psychic representations, Freud moves towards the repressed desire. Only if the reader were to systematically distort the materiality of the text and ignore the direction and sense of the queries which Freud leaves open throughout his MS, could he miss this peculiar procedure of Freud's, which moves forward from representation to representation, attempting to place them in

chains according to the clues he gets from his patient. In doing so, he certainly deviates on purpose from what is offered in the patient's discourse as "his reality" or concrete existence. On the one hand, Freud proceeds as if this reality or concrete existence were just as Imaginary as the story about the rat torture. On the other hand and at the same time, he brings to the fore—in the concrete circumstances by which the debt is apparently unpayable—to what degree the unconscious determinations of the Imaginary are more constraining than the seemingly more determining

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contingencies of reality and how, moreover, such unconscious determinations can manipulate such contingencies.

And so, notes Freud, ". . . our patient already knew that this 'cruel superior' was mistaken, and that he only owed money to the service-girl in the post-office. He would have been tempted to give an ironical reply, such as: 'Yes, you bet,' or else: 'Do you think I'm going to give her back the money!' Replies which ought not to be enunciated. But the paternal complex and the memory of the childhood scene in question having been already evoked, his reply formulated itself as: 'Yes, I shall give the money back to A. . . when my father or my beloved have children,' or: 'I shall give the money back to her as truly as my father and the lady have children.' Which is an ironical promise tied to an absurd and unrealizable condition."

In the first ten sessions written up, Freud gives us a convincing example, from the Lacanian point of view, of the way in which the analyst must be attentive to the unconscious overdeterminations of the forms and content of the Imaginary. Indeed, it becomes obvious the more one presses forward with Freud in these case-notes that such signifiers and unconscious determinations are our only means of action. The ethics of analysis rests on our scrupulousness in transcribing this discourse of the Other—one which tears the patient's discourse to shreds—and in spotting the signifiers in it which articulate a different desire, centered around lack, which is the "speaking dis-ease" which has brought him to our analyst's office. The analysand's ego, what he built up for himself as best he could, as a representation of self for playing roles on life's stage, does not leave us indifferent since the ego itself is also trapped, caught in the nets of the Other. But this ego does not guide our ethics, any more than it did Freud's in the Rat Man case.

Lacan shows how it was obvious to Freud in the Rat Man case that what presents itself to us as the patient's unconscious is a discourse and a desire whose dissimilarity—compared with the patient's own—justifies their being attributed to an Other. Freud calls this alterity peculiar to the unconscious "an Other scene," while taking note of the patient's surprise when faced with what surfaces from him. If we pay heed to this detail, it quickly becomes significant in the first five sessions, bearing in mind the number of times that Freud points out remarks by the patient about this intrusion of an Other. What is indicated by the desire that the unconscious reveals to subject and analyst alike is the looming forth of an Other scene, rather than the Imaginary

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of an individual place becoming visible, where the ego generates a life of its own. The desire of Man is the desire of the Other. This lapidary remark of Lacan's indicates the direction in which Freud bends his ethics of treatment from the outset. The analyst must steer his actions based on a desire which is not that of the subject in the first place, and which presents itself even at the out-



set as an intrusion of something Other, not to mention the revolting material therein entailed by the Rat Man's own account. Furthermore, the analyst, not content with steering by this signifying trace of the Other against even the patient's judgment, must adopt as a rule, and propose this desire as a rule, to his patient: "Wo es war, soll ich werden," in line with Lacan's renewal of Freud's formula: Where it was, I must come to be. Moreover, the ethical rule guiding the analyst will be never to give up on your desire.

"Using the resources of the subject which we keep intact [to return them] to the subject, psychoanalysis can accompany the patient as far as the ecstatic limit of "You are that," where the cypher of his mortal destiny is revealed to him, but it lies not within our mere power as practitioners to lead him to the moment when the true voyage begins" (*Écrits*, p. 100).

### **Discourse of the Analysand: Clinical Narrative as Epic of the Ego**

The analysand does not come to us in his demand for treatment informed by such principles. At least, his discourse scarcely shows any signs of it. Today, patients who consult an analyst are more informed about what they may expect as action and reaction from the analyst than the Rat Man was, but they do not have the good fortune, as he did, to participate with Freud himself in the invention of analysis. Nevertheless, the very ethics of analysis place them—along with us—under the obligation of having to start Freud's invention over. That is, precisely, what is so unique in every analysis. Whatever may be the knowledge, background, and information possessed by the person who comes to us for analysis, he finds himself up against our insistence that he reinvent the analytic act for himself in the way Freud's patients did. Our ethics, indeed, are patterned strictly on the uniqueness of the unconscious to be brought into play for each subject, and that's what is meant by our being true to Freud. It is not a question of bestowing on his writings, even the technical ones, an aura of Truth, but rather of renewing, in each case, the conditions which enable his invention to be repeated. Our presentday difficulties, in technique as well as theory,

result from this ethical insistence to which Lacan has furnished a contingent answer.

We may feel surprise nowadays at the freedom which Freud actually allowed the Rat Man at the start of each session. Indeed, left to what Freud calls the rule of free association, what did the Rat Man do? Exactly what our patients do today. They begin telling a story. In so doing, they suppose us to know enough to validate their narrative. Yet, we know that the narrative is a trap. The narrative, at the level of its surface structures, is a machine devoted entirely to the building up of an ego representation. Without over-exaggeration, one could posit as a clinical fact of experience that, in treatment, the narrative is dedicated to stage-setting the ego. Obviously, if the object of analysis—as Freud brings it forth for us in the case of the Rat Man—is the Other's discourse (this unconscious which intrudes into the patient's speech), then the narrative is a double trap when it comes to analytic cure. Not only in its spreading out of meaning does it systematically cut off the slips in the analysand's discourse, thus constituting a special repression of the Other's discourse, but even more so, by working on a build-up of narcissism, it forces closure on the rule of free association. How does Freud get out of this with the Rat Man, in order to maintain the keenness of the Other's discourse?

The Rat Man attempts to draw Freud into a narrative seductive to the listener. Freud apparently takes the bait. But, in fact, his attention is hovering elsewhere, not exactly where his patient's narrative wishes to lead him. Moreover, he does not fail to pinpoint the subject's withdrawal in the face of the account of torture, nor to intervene at that juncture by proposing, at first, the concept of "impalement," then, later on, by filling in a gap in the narrative: "There are rats boring their way . . . into my anus" (Second session, Thursday, October 4). And further on Freud remarks: "At all moments in the narrative which have a certain importance, one notices a strange expression come over him, which I can only interpret as the horror caused by a sensual pleasure of which he is himself unaware." And so, Freud's attention hovers right by the line of meaning in the patient's narrative. What holds his ear is something else, an other voice which steals into the patient's discourse: this discourse of the Other which punctures the narrative. The meaning which the Rat Man tries to build up in his narrative suffers an irretrievable flight in this Other discourse. It is this flight which rivets Freud's true attention, leaving him more or less indifferent towards the object at which the Rat Man's narrative is angling.

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Henceforth Freud can record everything that comes or looms forth as obsessive ideas, the insistent material issuing from an Other place which holds his attention, and organize it into what the Rat Man himself will call "interlinkage of thoughts." Clearly these jumbled thoughts which arise in the Rat Man's discourse and narrative respond to Freud's hovering anticipation, to his desire to gather up the signifiers from his patient's unconscious. What is he doing, then, when he chains these signifiers together? Is he reconstituting another narrative, one with a status of subjective truth vis-a-vis the patient's, so trying to reconstitute his authentic history? If so, then, why would this history, reconstituted as a narrative in the second degree, have priority over the narrative which is staged by the patient?

We see Freud engage during these first eight sessions in a special logic that sets up connections between sudden thoughts, injunctions, defenses, orders and obsessions which gradually reveal a sense of guilt and the unbearable pain of a desire for the father's death. But this setting up of logical connections between unconscious representations—the chaining together of signifiers to the point where a knowledge is built up—out of which Freud will understand, or pare down, what resists even this labor of chaining together, is not, for Freud, an operation by which a history of the patient is organized. In such work, Freud subverts the common notion of a subjective history which would constitute a meaning and a truth of the subject. He is not restoring a history, since he defines the unconscious, in this very text of the Rat Man, as that page in the subject's history which has in some manner been torn out. He is not restoring a history made impossible by the gaps which mark the breaks in it. He is putting one together which is all of a piece. This is what Freud will term "construction" in psychoanalysis. What matters for him (and he compared himself more to an archaeologist than to a historian) is not the "scientific" truth of his construction, but its symbolic effectiveness and its ethical dimension. He gives the Rat Man access to a knowledge by which he reckons to free him from his suffering and his obsessions. Freud emphasizes, furthermore, at which moment and on the appearance of which interpretation, the symptoms of obsession yielded, and cleared up. It was when the signifier with the *Rattenmamsell* emerged.

And so he breaks definitively and efficiently with the narcissistic traps of the narrative, without refashioning a truer history based on the opening up of the unconscious. In this way, he shows us a fundamental dimension in interpretation towards which Lacan has directed

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our attention again and again, Interpretation does not consist of giving a meaning to the discourse of the Other which breaks in upon the patient's. It picks up the signifier, rather, and supports the chaining together of the signifier as the promotion of a form of knowledge, to the point of leading the subject to the lack around which his knowledge is knotted. The wish for the father's death is the unbearable pain where the knowledge promoted by Freud's interpretation runs aground for the Rat Man. By breaking with this narrative, what Freud's desire aims at via the work of interpretation is that knot of vipers which bores into the Rat Man's psychic structure, just as the rats bore into the anus of the tortured man. Lacan has elaborated his concept of the *objet a* to mark this moment of conclusion in analysis as a "Real."

### **Conversation and the Relation to the Other**

If we follow Freud regarding the break in the narrative, we will discover the true meaning of resistance in what stands out for the patient on the horizon of the work of interpretation as an unassimilable Real, the *objet a*. For sure, the patient defends himself against that dizzying lack which grows hollow at the whim of thoughts and unconscious representations chained together. But beyond this, whatever is evinced in this hollow (as the center around which his existence becomes unraveled) refuses all representation. And the more this center grows hollow and gives way to talking, the more it appears to form the axis around which his unconscious desire winds. The horror which duly accompanies this fact which the subject refuses, justifies Lacan in talking about finding "the desire of the Other" there. How can Freud guide the Rat Man to the recognition of this wish for the father's death as his own wish, one that already pinpointed the hollow of the unsuspected *jouissance* aroused by the cruel Captain's tale of torture?

It seems to us through experience that the analysand often responds to the breaking off of the narrative by the analyst (breaking off the session, interpretation based on a phoneme or an apparently insignificant detail, picking up a new signifier, etc.) by diversionary tactics. He rushes headlong into the structures and strategies of conversation. He calls the analyst to witness and solicits his knowledge. The Rat Man is no exception. And Freud, determined to balance sacrifice against gain by giving all sorts of theoretical information to his patient, occasionally seems surprised by the Rat Man's defensive strategy of headlong flight. But Freud very quickly established a strategy which tells us a lot about his goal in the treatment.

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In the conversational gambit, an other is put in the place of that Other which Freud has taught us to constitute based on chains of unconscious thought lacing the patient's narrative and compromising the epic of the ego. The analyst's very gesture of breaking off the narrative by calling forth the discourse of the Other puts him in the position of occupying the locus of the Other in conversational strategies. The patient cannot resist this opportunity for dodging the Other. From the Second session on, Freud reports: "At a particular juncture, when I pointed out to him that I

am not cruel myself, he reacted by referring to me as 'my Captain'." And without further commentary, Freud added in his notes: "While complaining about the obtuseness of doctors, he praised me discreetly and mentioned he had read an excerpt from my theory of dreams."

By analysing what's at stake regarding the narrative in the patient's discourse, we can see how the interruption of the narrative allows the analyst both to extract the signifier and situate it in the signifying chain. Such work puts in place what Lacan terms "Knowing" (*le Savoir*), if the analyst attentively lends his "third ear" to the phonemic, syntactic and logical breaks alongside the narrative. Now this Knowing, which is drawn in some fashion from the discourse of the Other, defines the Other scene of the unconscious. The analyst can, therefore, be confused with the Other. This is what the Rat Man does from the outset. When it is conversation that's at stake, the analyst can be taken for the Other to such a degree that his position holds out nothing to the analysand's gaze. He is nothing but a voice, a vehicle of Knowing which the analysand still has not identified as the Other's Knowing, but which is not any the less unbearable for him (as Freud shows in the case of the Rat Man). At this point, the analyst in the position of the Other of conversation, can float in like the analysand's life-buoy.

In conversation, the subject decides his utterance based on his hypothesis regarding the Other's position and his calculation of its reactions and responses, just as in any strategic gambit. In this phase of the treatment, when interpretation has dispelled the charms and ruses of the narrative (exposing the subject to a Knowing in the Other marked by unbearable *jouissance*) the analyst, just by his presence, or his voice, offers an opportunity for dodging. The analysand speaks to him as if he were the Other. To be precise, he becomes the subject of Knowing, of which the analysand is only the object. In the Fourth session, it is Freud who seems to engage in "conversation." He steps in to make some theoretical contributions on affect and its content when he says

the patient "added an extension to his edifice of ideas into the beyond" and that the "consequence was a severe incapacity for work." "We are not accustomed," he writes, "to intense affects without representative content and, for that reason, for lack of some content, we substitute another in its place which pretty much suits, much like the police who, when they do not manage to nab the murder, arrest someone else in his place." Or again, in the Fifth session, "I drew his attention to the antiques on my desk, finds uncovered in burial—sites, which had been preserved by virtue of their being buried: Pompeii is perishing only now, since it has come to light."

In fact, Freud is trying to make his patient accept the unpalatable discovery of his unconscious as the discourse of the Other. He shores up his painful, wounding relationship to Knowledge of the unbearable *jouissance* of the rat torture. How can Freud make him accept what he could not endure in the Captain's story, in a different fashion, via interpretation? Without getting himself mixed up with the Other—since he informs his patient that he is not cruel—, he nonetheless sustains the discourse of the Other for him. He shows us the difficulty even in his manner of avoiding it. What counts, according to Lacan, is not interpreting from the place of the Other, not becoming ensnared in the gambit and strategies of conversation by which the Rat Man, just like our patients today, seeks to reinforce the tale of his ego and the ups and downs of his narcissistic ambitions. On close inspection, it is rather astonishing to see to what degree Freud succeeds in imposing a direction on the treatment, which rotates around the concatenation

of unconscious representations to the point of drawing forth this swirling center of the wish for the father's death.

So Freud succeeds in sustaining the discourse of the Other for the patient, without becoming confused with this Other. His analyst's speech simply records the signifiers which inscribe the Other's Knowing of the ignoble *jouissance* of the rat torture and its connection to the wish for the father's death. Freud, however, does not step ahead of the patient. He waits for him. He sustains this Knowledge that horrifies the Rat Man, without putting himself in the position of being the articulating subject of this Knowledge. Even his theoretical input, which some analysts so happily dispense with today, is actually aimed at maintaining the heterogeneousness of this other discourse, in relation to Freud's interpretation as such and in relation to the normal discourse of the patient. All occurs as if he wished to stamp this Knowledge with a status of logical independence in relation to the actual life

of the patient, as well as the experience of the treatment itself out of which interpretation extracts such Knowledge.

### **Free Association and the Discourse of the Other**

So, by following Freud's technique in light of his showing what the strategies of narrative and conversation bring as obstacles, there where the analysand spontaneously scurries as the unconscious opens up, we can have a more accurate grasp of the ethical aim of the clinic which Freud invented. Whether it's a matter of narrative, conversation, logical or rhetorical argumentation, or poetry—the four enterprises in which speaking hollows out language by its ruses for distorting or sustaining metaphor—none really accounts for the typically Freudian invention known as psychoanalytic discourse. What Freud invented there breaks with narrative, sustains the discourse of the Other of conversation without validating its presence, makes a tool of logical argumentation without espousing its ambition for truth, and, without adopting poetry's aesthetic, submits to what's at stake in poetry in picking up the voice which haunts language. Freud invented another space for discourse: the analytic field, which he promotes by articulating the unconscious as a discourse beyond-meaning interpreted in the transference, is a place for an "ethics of speaking well."

Freud set his patient a rule for talking at will, or else asks him at the beginning of a session (the Fourth): "How do you plan to go on from here?" But, make no mistake, this is only a variant of the basic rule which is the insistence on breaking with the narrative in order to let the Other's discourse in. But, during this phase, Freud himself digs in with logical argumentation and every rhetorical strategy that lets him catch unawares the sliding, condensations and displacements in which the unconscious reopens at the pleasure of the signifier. His Rat Man text is permeated with this contradiction between what he turns into the weapon of his listening—an implacable logic and a wily rhetoric—, and on the other hand this untrammelled speech which he requires of his patient under the rubric of "free association? What is Freud's desire, then, in the invention of a new discourse: is it the object of psychoanalytic discourse?

To a certain degree, this new discourse takes its bearings simultaneously from the rule of free association imposed on the patient by Freud and from Freud's technique of interpretation. It

is a discourse sustained by Freud's desire in his ethics of intervention, one which progressively determines the discourse of the analysand. It consists of the

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Other's discourse, the obsessive thoughts, the commands and defences, and the linkage of thoughts which the Rat Man takes note of, like an Other speech which permeates and breaks his own speech, and which he is surprised to hear himself utter. In the session of Sunday, October 27, Freud notes: "Unconscious ideas, inasmuch as they are inner voices, have the value of real discourses which he only understands in dreams." What escapes the Rat Man, but what Freud seems more and more sure of, is that the looming forth of unconscious representations is intimately linked to his own silent presence, his strategy of interrupting the narrative and avoidance of the position of Other as guarantor of truth in conversation. The more Freud stays away from strategies for ego montage, the more the Rat Man finds himself at grips with this Other voice, this Other place, whence Other demands are addressed to him. In that place, his status as a subject or even his being become unbearable, ending in the horror of an unknown *jouissance*, according to the indications which Freud left us in his notes.

But Freud does not seem to be satisfied with the discourse which his presence provokes. He is himself busy with a different desire which guides him and guides the treatment. Psychoanalytic discourse, the linkage of signifiers which permeate the Rat Man's discourse (and which are brought out by his presence and withdrawal) go further. These signifiers fasten a Knowledge whose object, perhaps the subject's very being, escapes language and does not manage to get symbolized by the Rat Man's speech. Every time the patient comes close to this beyond-meaning, words fail him. Even though he is reporting a story already told by the cruel Captain, Freud has to help him and suggest words to him. So, still in this October 27 session: "The idea occurred to him that she (the lady in the dream) had meant that he did not need to wash himself any more. He was seized with frightful emotion and hit his head against the wood of the bed. He felt as if he had a blood clot in his head. In similar circumstances, he had already had the idea of making a funnel-shaped hole in his head to let the sick part of his brain flow out, so it would be replaced afterwards in some way or other. I exclaimed: 'the Nuremberg funnel,' an expression frequently used by his father, in fact." He remains fascinated, however, by this thing which horrifies him and from which he wishes to tear himself away. Still on October 27, Freud noted retroactively: "For as long as he experienced difficulties in betraying the name of the lady, his narrative remained incoherent." But Freud maintains his own desire-to-know. Freud's desire to symbolize this *jouissance*, or the hatred

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which returns to the place of what is beyond all meaning, sustains the entire procedure of the treatment.

Finally, the rule of free association imposed on his patients by Freud is the prime condition of this opening up towards the Real, beyond-meaning, which does not enter into any order of speech, or any Symbolic order. At the very moment when, in attempting to escape from this formidable rule, the patient chooses the tempting gambit of narrative, or else dodges the interruption of the analyst by engaging him in the byways of conversation, the analyst's very actions and desire (which are never where the patient expects or seeks them), open a space for the insig-

nificant and beyond-meaning. Free association, supported by a hovering listener, is like the lining of the dream. It marks out the path to the Other's discourse, whence interpretation extracts the signifier and structures the place in the chain of that Knowledge which the analysand demands from analysis: the knowledge of that lack where his being is suffering from a "sickness of speech." In this place of non-sense and the unacceptable, the Rat Man can descry the naked bodies of women, rats, the florins of the debt, his father's verbal slip and the dead father. All objects which hollow out a lack in him, where his being escapes him on the borders of a *jouissance* as unknown as it is shameful.

"Must one pay this comical price for simply recognizing the subject's lack-in-being as the heart of the analytic experience, as the very field in which the neurotic's passion is deployed?" (*Écrits*, p. 613).

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Translated by Henry W. Sullivan*