

# COUCH AND SCREEN

Freud and the psychoanalytic situation on the screen

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Abstract

Even though all they depict is Freud as a man of over 70, the filmed documents (collected by Philip Lehrman, Marie Bonaparte, Mark Brunswick or René Laforgue) constitute a visual source which enables us to deepen our understanding of Freud the man, and from there, his relationship with the world from which arose both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. The rare professional films in which he appears are interesting for a different reason. They bear witness more to the image that film directors have of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts. Like all creative artists, film directors tend to transmit the fantasies of their epochs and their publics. With the exception of one, *Nineteen Nineteen*, they also illustrate the quasi-

impossibility of representing the psychoanalytical situation on screen.

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In my early childhood, I used to make adults laugh by singing the songs, often rather licentious ones, of the French singer Maurice Chevalier, one of the very few Frenchmen to become a genuine celebrity in U.S., and he was a day at the heart of an event in my life related to the cinema, an event that is partly the cause of this paper, and perhaps even of my involvement in psychoanalysis. I hope you will forgive me for telling you about this event as briefly as possible.

In 1939, a cinema director who was fleeing the Nazis, Robert Siodmack, was traveling through France before going on to America. There he made a few films, one of which was called *Pièges* (Traps) and it was shown in Paris. I was only six and a half years old, and its contents was not at all appropriate for my age, but I was taken to see it, precisely because the star was Maurice Chevalier.

The Second World War started shortly after, followed by the German Occupation of France, and this film, *Pièges*, was, of course, soon prohibited. As a result, it disappeared into forgetfulness for me, but the intensity of this forgetfulness would suggest it was to be referred rather to a repression.

In fact, when I myself went into psychoanalysis in 1960, I had no such memory of its contents, but I still alluded to its existence several times on the couch, with the certainty that it was important for me. This "screen memory" may perhaps have

remained indecipherable for ever, if television had not shown the film one evening in the seventies. I don't need to tell you that nothing would have stopped me from watching it. Because at the time there were no video-cassette recorders yet. It was an amazing experience because the images and the dialogues in this mediocre film suddenly turned out to be full of links and associations with my own life, with my parents and with my childhood's fantasies. That in fact could raise the issue of the impact of the audiovisual documents - which have become so common since video cameras - in the approach that every individual will have to his own history in the course of his psychoanalysis.

At this point, I would limit myself to say that the hero of *Pièges*, played by Maurice Chevalier, was unjustly accused of having been the sadistic assassin of several young women and was sentenced to death. He was ultimately saved, only thanks to the questioning of his supposed best friend by an old policeman, who proved the guilt of the friend by means of purely psychological arguments. You can imagine my stupefaction when, already very moved by the memories that this film had evoked in me, the psychoanalyst that I had become in the meantime, suddenly heard the assassin ask the policeman with furious irony : "Did you read Freud ?" It turned out that my memory at the age of six was actually rather good.

A memory trace - the result of an entertaining film - was engraved thirty years earlier in the unconscious of a child who was to become a psychoanalyst. It associated therefore the

name of Freud with a criminal investigation that found innocent one of his oedipian models of the time. Even though Freud himself did not appear in the film as an image, this mode of underground transmission could constitute a good introduction to what I have to say about "Freud on the screen".

I am not going to talk about "psychoanalysts on the screen" in general, because nine times out of ten, they are psychiatrists or psychotherapists rather than psychoanalysts, as Glen and Krin Gabbard, or Marc Vernet ([1]) had already pointed out.

Moreover, the paucity of the written or audiovisual bibliographical material available to me in France made it impossible to carry out any exhaustive research. Hence, I have chosen to limit what I have to say to the images I know of that are on films and that show Freud himself.

These images fall into two categories : on the one hand, fictional works, which we shall take up in the second part, and on the other hand, filmed documents or documentaries, that have been left to us by contemporaries such as Philip Lehrman, Mark Brunswick or Princess Marie Bonaparte, and that is what we shall start with ([2]).

What place do these audiovisual archives occupy in research on the history of psychoanalysis ? This is a theme that we shall not be able to go through in depth, but it was something that it was in the forefront of my mind when, in Paris, a few years ago, I suggested to my friend Jimmy Fisher the project of this Conference, that is taking place today.

Films representing Freud did not show us events of his history, such as the presentation of the Ratman's case in Salzburg in 1908, or the invasion of Freud's apartment by Nazis, thirty years later, for example. Rather, they offer moving and silent images of one of those illustrious men, whose biographers try to bring to life with so much effort, a representation which would, otherwise, be limited to still photographs or the descriptions of writers of memoirs.

In September 1929, a few months after Philip Lehrman shot his film, Smiley Blanton noted : "A small, frail and greying man suddenly appeared and moved toward me to greet me [...] Cigar in hand, he spoke to me almost timidly [...] as if *sotto voce*. His speech was somewhat confused, without doubt because of the several surgical operations that he had to undergo for his cancer of the jaw. [...] My main impression after this first contact : Freud's small size - I would say one meter sixty five -, his gentleness and something perhaps modest, almost humble in his attitude; also the way in which he was able to put you at your ease, while maintaining a distance that would allow the other person to express himself freely. But also an impression of fragility" ([3]) Five years later, in 1934, Joseph Wortis wrote : "Small, frail, very pale, he seemed extremely serious [...] His voice was low and veiled, and the metal device that he had in his mouth seemed to bother him quite a bit." ([4])

These phrases bring images to mind, and, if one associates with them information drawn from filmed documentaries, one has the impression that the contours and especially the mobility of Freud

become more specific. A "real" Freud, more human than the static portraits that one had of him - although I was struck by the fact that his attitude on the screen confirmed the rather curious posture with splayed-hips, cast by Oscar Nemon in his famous statue.

But who would dare talk of the "real" Freud ? As in the past, astute merchants pretending to sell pieces of the "real cross" of Christ... Since his death, there is no more a "real" Freud, even if we may be able to think that we are often presented with a manifestly false Freud. All we are left with, are the animated and moving images of a great man which we subject to our own psychical projections for the purpose of identification. Everyone has his own Freud, constructed in the best of cases - because I am not referring here to some partisan extremes - on the basis of all the available bits of information. This is a necessarily imaginary and arbitrary construction, in which films play a role whose supposed objectivity should not be overestimated.

Whatever they are, these documents do not speak for themselves. They are the object of multifarious manipulations whose existence one must take into consideration and whose parameters must be determined before suggesting some naive use of these documents.

Who filmed Freud and why ? Who wanted to contemplate Freud on the screen, and why ? We should dwell a bit on the second question, because, after all, any filming has no "raison d'être" other than as a function of the desire of someone to see the result. It is clear that these bits of amateur's films cannot in any

event interest someone who does not have an emotional or intellectual connection with psychoanalysis and its founder, assuming that one can ever dissociate completely the affective from the intellectual. They belong to the category of "family movies" and are destined as such for the members of the Freud family, of yesterday or of today, or for their friends who have found in them and continue to find in them the confirmation or the denial of certain experiences or reported memories. Seen in this way, these images form an integral part of the family saga. In the montage shown at the Freud Museum in London, Anna Freud comments with a joyful expression the sequence of a conversation in a garden between her father and his friend, the archaeology professor Emanuel Löwy. According to her, these are the best images of the film, because at that time Freud did not know that he was on camera. In fact, she reminds us that he did not like to be photographed or filmed and, when he was on camera, his attitude became somewhat unnatural.

She, and she alone, can recognize the furtive expression of a "real" Freud, that is to say of her own Freud, the one of whom she keeps a memory which the artificial image can bring to life with no reticence. Her oral witness prolongs and completes the effect of the film as such, because it draws our attention to the fact that this personality - whom one sees leaning in a familiar way towards his friend and speaking to him with volubility - is more authentic in her eyes - and hence in our eyes, if we identify with her in her proximity to Freud - than any other sequences in

which one sees Freud pretending to read a book or, like in Philip Lehrman's film, to open his mail.

But there are artificial families linked to family romances that we, no doubt, never stop writing unconsciously. In the same way that the fanatical readers of Marcel Proust tend to consider Aunt Leonie as their real aunt, and the characters of the *La recherche du temps perdu* as their own loved ones, those whom one calls "Freudians" designate by their first name Jakob, Amalia or Anna, with a certain familiarity, that is in line with their own identification with the "primal family". This kind of sense of belonging, connected with the pride of having a prestigious professional ancestry, has no doubt driven the analysands of Freud to fix on film certain characteristics of their psychoanalyst. And to do this with all the more insistence, because they did not see him during their therapy...

For everyone, and especially for psychoanalysts, documents on film in fact represent a reservoir for the completion or the enrichment of various literary constructions. They find in such documents the Founding Father and they note with emotion his gestures, his relationship to the space that surrounds him, the arrangement of his office, etc. For those who are or have been in analysis themselves, or who have become psychoanalysts, such images give a new depth to the fantasies linked with the birth of an experience or of a life activity that marked their existence. At this point, we should refer to the old debate whereby some state that knowing a work is sufficient in itself and that biographical data pertaining to the author add nothing new, for

example Homer, Shakespeare... Freud, who was so uncooperative himself with his own biographers, has spoken to this debate on several occasions nevertheless, as I mentioned it recently ([5]). He regretted not knowing anything about Shakespeare, and noted at the end of his preface to the book on *President Wilson* : "We cannot deny that in this case as in all others, a more intimate knowledge of the man would have made it possible to have a more precise appreciation of his works." If, in his own words, "one of the main functions of our thought is psychically to master the substance of the external world", this mastery is not reached without stages. A work cannot be approached or understood without certain steps in the approach. At first, it presents itself to the ego of the person who is confronted with, as a foreign body, but in the same time a living body, which insists on its human origin between the lines of the writing, between the notes of the musical score, or the brush strokes on the canvas. It cannot be identified with a pebble, whatever its degree of abstraction, and can never be grasped by a disembodied intellect. The passionate relationship that mathematicians or physicists have with their formulae are a good demonstration of the affects involved. However, everyone negotiates in his own way the power of his affects in the approach to a work. Some protect themselves through an intellectualization whose obsessional neurosis represents the extreme. Fearing the revival of traumatic, sexual or violent, scenes, they mobilize their defenses against their curiosity of infantile origin. They oppose themselves to

becoming aware of their "uncounscious fantasies of identification" to the author - I refer here to a notion that I proposed in my book, *Les visiteurs du moi* ([6]). For these people, it is pointless - not to say upsetting or even dangerous - to base their approach on the study of his biography.

On the other hand, there are those who need to rest themselves on the affect, in order to integrate ideas, but they must control this mechanism which would otherwise run the risk of inhibiting their thought. The biography, or the filmed document, does not, of course, provide them with an "explanation" of the work, even though they may pretend that this is the case, neither do such documents offer a development of the content, because the work, like the concept, is finite as an object. But some biographical familiarity does promote an understanding and assimilation of ideas that might perhaps otherwise have remained prohibited. In the same way, an open parental attitude, because of the potential for identification that it offers, makes in the eyes of the child less incomprehensible the life and the behaviour of those adults who are objects of his curiosity, of his *Forschertrieb*.

Even though one may regret the stressing of the artificiality of movements, because of their accelerated projection, the amateur silent films contain images that bear conscious meaning and unconscious resonances. In Philip Lehrman's film, Freud suddenly throwing away his stub of cigar, pushing away his daughter's arm, the image of his anxiety when he is posing by the window of his office, the unbearable irritation of the

prosthesis in his mouth, the "monster", his air of a frail bird in the middle of running dogs... All of these details, while seeming trivial to the eyes of "History" (with a capital "H") or the "history of ideas", solicit in us the "interpretation machine" of the other's unconscious that Freud postulates in *Totem and Taboo*. They contribute to giving us a better sense, rather than an understanding, of the relationship between Freud and others, both his disciples and his patients, with that blending of anxiety, of moments of abandonment and of brusque rejection, and his solitude in the midst of external agitation. Of course, what is missing is the sound of voices... Soon we would be deploring the absence of relief, or of smells, because the persistent dissatisfaction of our regret of not having been able to see the past, to be the witness of scenes experienced by the characters of our ideal museum, those who are more or less directly constituting parts of ourselves.

But here, it is obvious that I am projecting my "real" Freud in the choice that I have just made of certain sequences for this part of the presentation that I am offering to you. More talented than I am, others have done or will do similarly with different sequences that they would have isolated in a different way.

These cinematographic documents, while they occupy a privileged place among the means that researchers can use to quench the thirst of their biographical curiosity, can thereby contribute to the creation of literary, theatrical or cinematographic works and insure in their own way transmission of psychoanalytical ideas.

Fiction in fact ends up trying to fill the hole of its insufficiencies and when it is successful, it gives us for a moment the illusion of mastering a past that has escaped us forever, by recreating it.

Thus we move on to the theme of Freud in front of the camera of professional cinematographs. Numerous works have been devoted to the analysis of the few films in which he appears, to my knowledge : to begin with, of course, *Freud, The Secret Passion*, by John Huston, in 1962; in 1976, the parody entitled *The Seven Per Cent Solution*, by Herbert Ross; in 1978, the didactic documentary *Der junge Freud* (The Young Freud), by Axel Corti; in 1983, *Lovesick*, by Martin Brickman and in 1984 *Nineteen nineteen*, an English film in which Freud is evoked in a particularly original manner.

We should note one characteristic common to all these films, except *Nineteen Nineteen* and *Lovesick* : contrary to the filmed documents, they only show a young Freud who has not yet become a psychoanalyst. One may be surprised by the fact that no one has ever used other periods of Freud's life, his relationship and his break with Carl Jung, for example, to build some dramatic situation. Everything is occurring as if everybody were obeying the order given by Freud himself, namely: my life is of no interest, and my history is the history of the beginning of psychoanalysis.

In so far as these fictional films are concerned, before tearing them apart for their frequent naiveté or their several historical errors, I would like to recall what was said by Georges Sadoul,

the French historian of the cinema, in the Encyclopedia La *Pléiade*, devoted to "History and its methods" : "To grasp the value of this kind of documentary, let us imagine what the worst commercial film shot in the times of Aménophis the Fourth, or Julius Caesar, would represent for historians of today. [...]

Whatever their genre, films constitute for the future incomparable treasures that cover not yet history in general, but also the history of mores, of costumes, of gestures, of the arts (including cinema), of languages and of technology." ([7])

Moreover, and in a more visible way than the archival document which is reserved for specialists, the film, which is disseminated to the public at large, also acts as an agent of history. It influences audiences and takes on a positive or negative power of propaganda, which forms the judgement of the masses, even though the creator is himself, consciously and unconsciously, inspired by what is suggested to him by the cultural society in which he lives and creates. And when Freud and psychoanalysis are concerned, in addition to these socio-cultural parameters, you also have the profound resonance that the wild pseudo-psychoanalytic procedure of the film cannot fail to evoke within the team.

In 1962, the first film devoted to Freud is quite typical in this respect, even if the public success of the film was not in line with the ambitions of a John Huston, surpassed by the demons that he had awakened. The film shows, on the basis of a scenario written by a French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, who was rather hostile to psychoanalytic notions, what the American

public wanted to think of the Freudian psychoanalysis. John Huston and the infernal couple that he formed with Montgomery Clift became the medium for this message, through the commercial requirements of the United States and those of individuals who worked on the film with them. Such is the main interest of the film today, and I am not going to insist here of the many liberties that Huston took with the history of historians. Stimulated by the publication of the first volume of Jones' biography and of the letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Huston mixed up Sartre's obsessions, his own ones and those of the Hollywood team that re-wrote and interpreted his movie.

Freud almost always appears in the film as being furious, with a "gloomy look", rigid, pale, absolutely devoid of humor, trapped in his own neurosis up to the point of becoming a lucid Sartrean consciousness, by ridding himself of the protective and hated fathers with whom he had surrounded himself. Driven by the hostility of Viennese doctors, pricked by antisemitism, he commits himself, according to Sartre's conceptions, to a revolutionary struggle for the liberation of "oppressed" hysterics, unjustly accused of "simulation", because of the puritanism of the society.

In her *Journal* of the 16th July 1958 Simone de Beauvoir wrote :  
«Jones does not provide a deep explanation of the specific neurosis of Freud nor how he got out of it. [...] Such are questions that he does not ask : for example, the relationship between Freud and his wife. It is easy to say that the relationship was "excellent", but Freud's depressions and migraines linked or

not to his domestic life ? After all, he was a very dynamic man : witness his passion for traveling. Monogamous, no doubt, but precisely why ? This question is one of those that Jones eschews. [...] The most touching moment is when he discovers his mistake about hysteria. He suddenly understands that his patients had invented everything. What a denial ! [...] It is touching to see these notions that became so scholastic and mechanical, for example transference, became revealed in so lively experience.» **[8]**

A lively experience that became a show. Nothing was neglected to communicate these impressions to the public. John Huston and Montgomery Clift, also in the reality of their conflictual relationship during the shooting of the film, accentuated a general "hysterization" of the story which characterizes the film and which was already present in the scenario by Sartre. Thus Freud becomes a romantic hero, in the image of the one described by Sartre during his stay in the Huston's house in Ireland, in October 1958, in a letter to "Castor" : "In the middle of a vast number of rooms, a great, romantic, odd, sad and solitary wanders, this is our friend Huston, perfectly empty, aged and incapable(*underlined in the text*) literally of talking to the people he has invited." **[9]**

In 1965, John Huston confided to the French critic Robert Benayoun : "The basic idea, that of Freud the adventurer, the explorer of his own unconscious, comes from me. I wanted to concentrate on this episode in the manner of a detective story." He also specified : "For me, hypnosis has a magical, almost

sacred quality" ([10]). As we shall not cease to stress, it is in fact the hypnotic treatment and the catharsis that is presented to the public. At no point, is it a question of psychoanalytic situation, and that is a constant characteristic of the films that pretend to show psychoanalysts in action.

Cinema has its requirements, and Marc Vernet has given a good description of the need in the Hollywood system to promote, in any film pretending to deal with psychoanalysis, the detective story aspect, and the suspense of an enigma to be solved. John Huston's *Freud* has not turned its back to this convention, and appears to us as in conformity with this classical character who - alone against all and especially against himself - must insure the triumph of a truth that he reviews through suffering. In the final analysis, he does not differ much from a lawyer, or a policeman - we are back again to the film *Pièges* -, or a justice-seeking cowboy who overcomes his own prejudice and that of his entourage, in less than ninety minutes, to save an innocent, unjustly condemned man.

All the more so in that, a lot of censure was exercised in the question of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir : where is Freud's sexuality in the whole story ? Despite the lessening that he made in the original scenario, John Huston had to submit to stated and non-stated imperatives of American censure - the non-stated were those which he had in his own mind. He was constrained to adapt his film to the ideological requirements prevailing in the world of psychiatry and psychoanalysis as of the main religious communities. Later on, he felt sorry for the

fact that the film was : "literally mutilated of its essential scenes" ([11]). The greatest fear was that the image of Freud could be harmed by his promiscuity with excessively shocking scenes. Freud's family was opposed to any of its living members being represented, hence the childless couple that one sees on the screen. The theme of prostitution - which Sartre stressed so insistently that I wonder whether this might not be a conscious or unconscious response to questions about Freud and sexuality - this theme was at the time condemned because, according to the censors, it "has nothing whatever to do with Freud from the historical point of view." ([12])

It must not be forgotten that, at the time, as J.-B. Pontalis reminds us, research on the history of psychoanalysis was almost non-existent ([13]). For instance, everyone repeated the legend popularized by Jones about Josef Breuer fleeing to Venice with his wife, a departure followed by the conception of his daughter Dora. In fact, he spent his eighteen-eighty-two summer holidays in Gmunden, near an Austrian lake. As for his daughter : she was born in the former March, that is well before the end of Bertha Pappenheim's therapy ([14]). And there are many other anachronisms and inconsistencies... For lack of points of discussion when the film appeared, it was necessary to avoid the risk of dirtying the image of a theory and a practice that its American practitioners wanted to promote as a science, closely linked with medicine.

However, if the film can be criticized on many grounds, one must give it the great merit for psychoanalysts of my generation of

having done away with the official portrayal imposed upon us at the time of an old Freud wearing spectacles and a beard, a noble scholar whom we were supposed to admire with religiosity. Even though it seems to me today artificial, excessive in the expressions and the abusive use of Montgomery Clift's wounded look, the personality we saw on the screen did allow us to imagine a Freud closer to ourselves, to our age and to our enthusiasms. Above all, it enabled our fantasies of identification with his discovery, and allowed us to hope that, maybe, we too could revolutionize the world...

Time is passed, and the rare other films that show Freud are no longer bearers of this romantic hope. They reflect the evolution of the image of psychoanalysis among the public.

The clearest example of this demystifying lack of respect is *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, by Herbert Ross, dating from 1976.

Here again, it is a Freud from the time of hypnosis that we see in action. And what action !.. What acrobatics, what sport there is in curing the great Sherlock Holmes himself from his addiction to cocaine. This film pretends in no way to be historical, and it joyfully piles on the anachronisms. Freud appears sympathetic and courageous in his struggle against evil antisemites, and his interpretations are not on a higher level than those of Sherlock Holmes, even though he orders him "to guess", rather than engage himself in logical deductions. In any event, he also orders his patient to forget upon his awakening the remembering of the traumatic scene supposed to be at the origin of all his problems...

Things are quite different in the film that Axel Corti shot in 1978 for Austrian Television under the title *Der junge Freud* (The Young Freud). This is an extremely serious work which shows, starting with the images of Freud leaving Vienna to emigrate to England, a flashback of his progressive discovery of psychoanalysis. Certain liberties are taken with real history, but more for the purpose of condensation than of distortion. Freud is shown as a wise student, obstinate in his research, in any event without the troubled aura of Montgomery Clift. The technical artifice is that of representing a sort of interview with Freud, which is intermingled with scenes played by physically rather credible actors. Thus one sees Freud take himself out at times of the scenes in order to have a dialogue with someone off stage. But, next to these cinematographic effects, including also several flashbacks to a very realistic scene of Jakob Freud's hat thrown in the mud by an antisemite, the film is essentially didactic in nature and is more in the documentary genre than in a genre of a romanesque fiction. For this very reason, it is less susceptible to idealization and identification.

Let us note however that once again what is shown is a pre-psychoanalytic Freud. There are many allusions to the studies on the cocaine, and once again the legend of Breuer is used. In fact, this is the most precocious period, since there is no scene of psychotherapy, except for a rather furtive one, of a young man. The film ends with the publication of the *Studies on Hysteria*, and the departure of Freud by train to a "conference"

with Fliess, an image that links into that again of the departure in exile, forty-three years later.

In any event, this is the only film in which I have seen a rather long treatment of the relationship with Wilhelm Fliess, the character of the paranoid villain imagined by Sartre having disappeared from the final version that we know.

There isn't much to say about *Lovesick*, a film produced in 1983, by an epigone of Woody Allen and Martin Brickman revolving around the amorous relations that a psychoanalyst, more ridiculously idiotic than funny, maintains with one of his patients. It accumulates the most worn out jokes and gags about the practice of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts, one of whom is a sort of doting supervisor, played by John Huston himself.

This failed film did not have much success and it would not merit any mention if it were not for the fact that its author had the idea of bringing Professor Freud down from the frame of the photo decorating the office of his pitiful hero in order to participate in his interior monologues. It is the Freud of the classic photograph taken in 1921, dressed in and without glasses, cigar in hand, that Alec Guinness interprets and who we see intervene in the daydreams of the young analyst in order to offer several disenchanted pronouncements on counter transference and some encouraging remarks to "be himself" in addition to the accepted ideas. At the end of the film, when the hero renounces the practice of psychoanalysis in favor of the pursuit of "true love" with his patient, Freud announces that, he too, has had enough of the interesting experience of the couch because it

has become an industry. Thus, he leaves for Mexico to further his interest in drugs, new religions, etc.

The value of such a representation is that it illustrates the evolution of the New York intelligentsia in 1983, concerning "shrinks" and its opinion on their problems and their infantile position. The "founding father" is here reduced to the classical paternal figure of American comedies - a bit out-dated, a bit overwhelmed by events, half-indulgent, half-grouchy in the face of the escapades of his spiritual son ([15]).

A different matter all together is its contemporary, *Nineteen nineteen* (1984), an English film by Hugh Brody, on the basis of an idea of Michael Ignatieff. It is - to my knowledge - the only one film that can give psychoanalysts the sense of an authentic perception of what happens in the course of psychoanalytic therapy. Do I need to add that it seems not to have been very successful ?.. Its theme is the imaginary meeting in Vienna, in the nineteen-seventies, of two ex-patients of Freud, who were on his couch in *Nineteen nineteen*, namely the Wolfman and the patient whose story is told in the nineteen-twenty's paper : "The psychogenesis of homosexuality in a woman". The role of this ex-patient is played by Maria Schell, and we know how she tried to help Montgomery Clift, twenty years earlier, during the filming of the Huston's *Freud* in Germany. Having grown old in the mean time, the two patients told each other about their lives and their psychoanalysis, united for a brief instant both by the relative failure of their therapy and by the sense of what those moments

of their meetings with Freud represented and continued to represent in their existence.

The great originality of the film consists in the following : the actual scenes, in today's Vienna, alternate with flashbacks which take us back to the time of the psychoanalysis of the two main characters, who are then played by younger actors. This first intermingling of time is also cut up with references on the basis of old silent documentary films to the time of the characters' childhood : a supposed house of the Wolfman's father, for instance, or of other moments in their life, such as the bolshevik revolution or the Nazi Anschluss in Austria.

But, as we see them, analysands stretched out on the couch in Freud office - faithfully redecorated on the basis of Edmund Engelman's famous photographs -, as they speak to their analyst as if in the time of their session, these scenes are framed in such a way that we never see Freud. In fact, we only hear his voice, a very lively one and slightly veiled, as the memoir writers have described it, asking questions, suggesting interpretations or constructions, and sometimes making jokes. Thus his presence, while just suggested and not involving any visual image, becomes all the stronger. Through the fantasies that this absence cannot fail to raise up in the spectator, who then identifies with these analysands - who did not see their analyst and who will never see him again, since he has been dead for thirty years already-, the film gives of Freud, of the transference and of the psychoanalytic situation, a cinematographic image that is moving in its approach to an authenticity.

If I had limited myself to talking about "the psychoanalytic situation on screen", I would have ceased trying your patience much earlier. As far as I can tell, and in my sense of the analytic situation - a sense which, of course, can be discussed -, it has almost never yet been shot as such, on the screen. Nothing is in fact less cinematographic, because nothing is less visual, nor less susceptible to providing a material for a dramatic scene, except for some very rare moments. Film directors have made no mistakes about this, and one cannot reproach them for having been more interested in Freud, the pupil of Charcot, than in Freud, the psychoanalyst.

Among the technical conditions set out by Freud as being essential for analysis, we find, to begin with, the free associations in lieu of any action, and the position of the analyst outside the field of vision of the analysand. One can imagine that these two necessities are opposed to those of the cinematographic dynamics. The need to dramatize action, in order to awaken the interest of the spectator, has resulted in favoring, as we noted several times, the old situation of the police investigation, with a psychical enigma to be solved. But any reference to such an enigma means a scene in which the solution is represented, and thus in a dramatic crescendo, taking the form of a suspense. That, of course, can only be realized in the supposed psychotherapeutic research, through the reliving of an original traumatic scene. As in the time of Charcot, the traumatic aetiology thereby becomes preeminent again. And it was against this that Freud had to struggle to impose his

hypothesis of the psychological reality, as the object of the psychoanalytic research. In the same way - and this too we have noted in passing -, the position of the analyst sitting in his arm chair behind the couch where his patient is lying, has caused very drastic difficulties for most directors.

And this has been true since 1926, when the very first film in which the psychoanalytic situation was shown, *The Secret Of A Soul*, by Wilhelm Pabst. Despite the supervision of Karl Abraham and Hanns Sachs, we can see some images of sessions in which the analyst and the patient are discussing, or the analyst is beating the couch before him in order to emphasize his interpretations, or is approaching his head to his patient who turns toward him. In fact, the patient ends in standing up in order to snatch up a paper-knife from his therapist's desk, and then to mime his imaginary crime with movements reminiscent of a coitus, in a grand scene of cathartic exorcism. This is to be the healing of his impotence...

Let us not refer more to *Spellbound*, nor *Sex and the Single Girl*, nor *Lady in the Dark*, nor to so many others where the need to have two faces on the same level on the image has forced the director to put the analyst side by side with his patient, even though he may be a little bit more in the background. Similarly, maybe in order to help the actor to adapt his posture during the time where he is listening, the analyst is provided with a pad of paper and a pen, in order to take down with an air of concentration, those notes that Freud recommended to be avoided.

Jean-Bertrand Pontalis has shown that the approach of Freud was to occupy the interior space that Charcot's researches - because Charcot was visual - had ignored to the benefit of the exteriority of aetiology and the symptomatic contortions of his hysterics ([16]). Cinema has almost always failed in making this interiority meaningful, at least as long as it has tried to attack it directly by putting the analytic situation on screen. This failure is also visible when it is a question of representing a dream, because if one harks back to a famous sequence such as that of the Pabst's film, or the one, of course, that Hitchcock asked Salvador Dali to illustrate, one forgets that the expressionism used is purely a cinematographic convention, without much bearing on what we in fact dream about.

One cannot forget that the telling of a dream and the associations that it gave rise to are the only material on which the analyst and the patient can work. And this material is essentially verbal. But, in the cinema, one has to show images... On this occasion, I would also recall quickly how much sexuality in the Freudian sense and in the sense of what is constructed of it in analysis, has little in common with pornographic images and the amorous games, that are offered to us today in a cinema that has been partly freed of the censorship of yesterday. The point is that we remain always in the domain of the externalization in the actual representation, and not in the surge back to infantile feelings or theories. We remain in what is figurative rather than in the inner thought. The obsession of viewing and of vision is in fact constant. Sartre's *Freud*

*scenario* is one example of this, and John Huston was faithful to it by continuing to show scenes centered on the eyes of Montgomery Clift and by concentrating on hypnosis scenes. The spectacles are also a constant that cannot be attributed solely to the age of psychoanalysts, as shown by Constance in *Spellbound*.

But all of this has already been said quite often and I am thinking here of the work by Marc Vernet ([17]). I would add that the tempo of analysis has a rhythm which is very different from that of the cinema, and that it is very difficult to render the sensation of that tempo. The immediacy of hypnotic falling asleep, and of the transfer that is attached to hypnosis, is in opposition to the slow process of working through and to the significance of the break effects that are implied by the sequence of sessions and by the duration of psychoanalytic therapy. One can imagine that one of the solutions chosen by film directors to get around this difficulty was to allow for the development of a romantic liaison between the psychoanalyst and the male or female patient, which then allows the viewer to imagine that they will never leave one another...

Once again, I found that only *Nineteen Nineteen* was able to take into consideration this break, and the specificities of a psychoanalytic situation very difficult to represent visually. I could even say that the use of an intermingling of three other times in the present story, the story of the analysis, the story of childhood, and the historical story, almost manages to give a cinematographic representation of that very important Freudian

notion of "*l'après-coup*" or *Nachträglichkeit* which has been translated into English in such a disputable fashion as "deferred action".

Only this film through the artifice of never showing Freud, although he is omnipresent in the emotional memories of his analysands, has managed to render perceptible that "absent third party" that is indispensable for the economics and the dynamics of any psychoanalytic session. Both the patient and the analyst pursue in parallel the evocation of someone who is missing, and around whom their conscious discourse is turning, but, also and more, their silences and their unconscious fantasies. This convergence allows for identifications which, taking place in both directions, are necessary for the psychoanalytic process to continue and to remain living. This "absent third party" can never be represented since it is but a fantasmatic organizer, a sort of catalytic agent, and that is rendered very well by Freud's absence in the film. Every scene showing the two protagonists in the psychoanalytic situation puts the spectator in the position of becoming himself a "third party" who is not at all absent, and who introduces an unbalance in the situation supposed to be psychoanalytic. This situation is then devoted solely to the conscious exhibition of images which, whatever their cinematographic subtleties, are necessarily of a deplorable naivete, from a psychoanalytic point of view.

But I am being extremely severe with these films that have engraved the name of Freud in me when I was about six years old or that allowed me to discover a young passionate Freud

when I was thirty... I might not misunderstand the strength of an unconscious which does not take theories very seriously, nor the power of identifications whose underground trajectories we very often ignore. Cinema is magical because even when the images are carefully controlled, conscious intentions and especially unconscious motivations of its creators, even if they are not all geniuses, nevertheless manage to slip in.

Who can tell what a given scene, a given piece of dialogue, may have as an effect on the memory of the person contemplating the film ? Who knows what needs it may give rise to, what nostalgia it may awaken, showing a Freud - even rather caricatured - or a scene from a supposed psychoanalysis, even if this is the worst kind of hypnotic catharsis ? Who knows what resonance such a film may have in one of its viewers ?

For this viewer, what uncertainty may appear in the telling of his own history, what a sense that perhaps not actually everything happened as he always believed it did ? Leaving the cinema, who knows if he is not thinking that, perhaps he might talk about that to someone, even thirty years later...

*Los Angeles, November 1993 \**

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- [1]. Glen O. et Krin Gabbard, (1987), *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, Chicago Univ. Press.; Marc Vernet, Freud : "Effets spéciaux. Mise en scène : U.S.A.", *Psychanalyse et cinéma, Communications*, 23, 1975, 223-234.
- [2]. To my knowledge, these films are : *Sigmund Freud, His Family and Colleagues, 1928-1947*, made by Lynne Weiner-Lehrman from shots taken by her father, Philip Lehrman - *Freud : 1930-1939*, made by Clifford York from shots taken by Mark Brunswick and Marie Bonaparte, commented by Anna Freud (Freud Museum, London) - *Sigmund Freud Home Movies*, Library of Congress and Freud-Archives (1992), shots by Marie Bonaparte - Unpublished sequences filmed by René Laforgue, copyright Mme Délia Laforgue.
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[8]. Simone de Beauvoir, *La force des choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1963, p. 452-453.

[9]. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Lettres au Castor*, 2 (1940-1963), Paris, Gallimard, 1983, p. 358.

[10]. *Positif*, 1965, 70, p. 18.

[11]. *Positif*, 1965, 70, p. 18.

[12]. But I refer here to the Janet Walker's book, which quotes extensively from various reactions to the film : Walker J. (1993), *Couching resistance. Women, Film, and Psychoanalytic Psychiatry*, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, p. 144-160.

[13]. Pontalis J.-B., "Préface" in : Sartre Jean-Paul, *Le Scénario Freud*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, p. 14.

[14]. Cf. Hirschmüller A. (1978), *Joseph Breuer*, trad. fr. M. Weber, Paris, PUF, 1991.

[15]. I refer those who wish to know more to Glen and Krin Gabbard's detailed report in : "Countertransference in the movies", *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 1985, 72, 1, 171-184.

[16]. Pontalis J.-B., "Entre Freud et Charcot", in : *Entre le rêve et la douleur*, 1977.

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