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Paper title: **Vicissitudes and their Inscriptions**

In his marking of the consequential *vicissitudes* that attend the more primary *instincts*, Freud articulates history as the discursive operation of the psychoanalytic undertaking, but his ambivalence towards the requisite writing of that articulated history comes through when he introduces the narrative genre of the *case study*. The first part of this paper will examine Freud's implicit proposition that psychoanalysis comprises a complex articulation of history in that symptoms are noted and inscribed as consequential, present indicators of causal instincts which have been variously, "fatefully" re-routed. In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915)[1], Freud's English title tells us that the fundamental psychical component, instincts, always carries with them changes, fluctuations, mutabilities. "Vicissitudes" designate a performance of sequence. Indeed, the performative character of the Instinct is suggested by the Standard Edition editor's Introduction to this essay deeming it "the clearest account of what Freud understood by the instincts and of the way in which he thought they operated." This essay's conjoining of instincts and their vicissitudes is a concerted effort of Freud's "to deal with the subject *comprehensively*" (Freud 113, my emphasis), this modifier not only underlining the subject's trajectory character but also suggesting the operational approach plied by Freud himself.

The English word "vicissitudes" is poetically inviting as an element for comprehension. But Freud was of course writing this essay in German, with the given title *Triebe und Triebschicksale*. Although plenty of attention in the editor's Introduction is devoted to explaining Freud's use of the word "*Triebe*", no editorial explanations are offered for what is apparently less notable: the meaning and understanding of the word *triebschicksale*. *Triebeschicksale* means,

[1] (Freud 1953-73, vol XIV)d

literally, the fate, fortune or destinies of the *Triebe*, carrying with them the inevitability of their direction. Key to my proposition for Freud's articulation of a theory of history is the etymological convergence of *schicksale* (destinies; fortunes) with *geschichte* (occurrence, narration, tale, history). This confluence will be explored below as Freud's own inscription of a psychoanalytic theory of history as narrative story. Furthermore, his introduction of the case-study as a genre of narrative writing submits to the public a particular relation to historiography. Freud's defensive presentation of the very first case study, the "broken fragment" of Dora and her hysteria, will be considered in the second part of this essay, reading Freud's ambivalence towards his own historiographic operation. Freud's ambivalence also serves here as an index to the more general ambivalent nature of historiography outlined by De Certeau.

Before looking at Freud's own list of what comprises "vicissitudes" or *Triebschicksale*, we might look at the Editor's Note which precedes the *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, which, as noted above, does not actually consider the "vicissitudes" at all, but which does explain in detail Freud's application of the word *Triebe* in this essay and throughout his other writing. In his gloss of Freud's use of *Triebe*, James Strachey's primary emphasis is on Freud's lack of distinction here between "*Triebe*" and "*Triebrepräsentanz*", that is, between instinct and "instinctual representative." (Freud 111) Strachey points out that there are numerous examples throughout Freud's earlier writings in which an instinct is to be understood as an "instinct-representative", "'a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic,…the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind'." (Freud 112) For my purposes here of understanding what "vicissitudes" are for Freud, and for understanding his articulation of history, I would like to propose that the *Triebe* as *Triebrepräsentanz* realise an aptness, an aptness for the performative tendency towards operation that is "vicissitudinous." The *Triebe* as *Triebrepräsentanz* offers itself up to tropic possibility, a possibility whose narrative dimensions are signaled in the temporally imbued *Triebschicksale*. Freud's term and notion of the *Treibschicksale* in many ways encompasses his entire psychoanalytic undertaking. Instincts, the fundamental somatic needs which appear as force (Freud 118-119), take "course" and "undergo displacement" (Freud 123), re-routed towards their *schicksale*: their destinies, their fates. These inevitable pathways, or "vicissitudes" which an instinct might undergo include the following, outlined by Freud, who explains that he is focusing on sexual instincts and their fates:

> Reversal into its opposite.
> Turning round upon the subject's own self.
> Repression.
> Sublimation.
> (Freud 126)

The historical character of *Triebe und Triebschicksale* is implied in phrases such as "pathogenesis of hysterical symptoms" and "psychosexual aetiology" that come through in other texts, for example, "Fragment of an Analysis of a case of Hysteria."[2] Engendering consequential psychic actions, the instincts, within the context of the psychoanalytic scenario, set into motion the construction of an individual's life story. The categories of vicissitudes that Freud has listed read like dramatic plot structures.

That *Triebschicksale* run a course destinally from *Triebe*/*Triebereprăsentanz*, indicates the sequentiality belonging to narrative structure. Through the figuration of the force which engenders them, the inevitable pathways that might include reversals into opposites, turning round upon themselves, repression, and sublimation, are forged through the narrative movement of the tropic figure.

Etymological research into the word *schicksal* reinforces the sense of historicisation suggested by the fateful courses attached attached to the instincts. Coming from the Modern High German *Geschick,* meaning "fate, destiny, dexterity" and based upon Middle High German *geschicke*, meaning "event, order, formation, figure," *schicksal,* used in modern German, departs slightly from the older meaning, in terms of the modern word bearing a sense of inevitability which might have been skillfully outmaneuvered in its former mode of *geschick.*[3] The etymological connection between *geschick* and *geschichte* is made in Kluge's *Etymological Dictionary of the German Language* in the following entry:

> **Geschichte**, feminine, 'occurrence, narration, tale, history,' from Middle High German *geschiht*, Old High German *gisciht*, feminine, 'event, occurrence, cause

[2] Freud (1953-73, vol. VII:13)

[3] *An Etymological Dictionary of the German Language* (1891) by Friedrich Kluge, translated by John Francis Davis, see An Etymological Dictionary of the German Language. My thanks also to Marei Schweitzer for her detailed gloss on both *Geschick* and *Geschichte*.

> of an event, dispensation' (Middle High German also 'affair, manner, stratum'; see *Schicht*); abstract of *geschehen*. Similarly Modern High German **Geschick**, 'fate, destiny, dexterity,' is based upon Middle High German *geschicke*, neuter, 'event, order, formation, figure,' as the abstract of Modern High German *schicken*. (Kluge 1891)

The fatedness of the vicissitude merges into the unfolding of an event, narrated as story. In German, the word *geschichte* is the word for both "story" and "history", another convergence which is related to Freud's articulation of history, to be explored below. For now, let us briefly consult Michel de Certeau's theorization of history, which he exemplifies in Freud's proposed science of psychoanalysis. "Such is the way," de Certeau tells us,

> [that] Freudian therapeutics proceeds: analysis discerns organizations in the words of patients that 'betray' a genesis; it refers them to events that they hide and which become—as *both* absent and present—a past.[4]

Thus Freud's talking cure-therapeutics constructs a "past" through the analyst's present discernment of "organisations in the words" of the analysand, which, only when (re)marked as "organisations," indicate an otherwise hidden origin.

Psychoanalysis reads the symptom, the destined manifestation of the course of the *Triebe*. Tracking the pathways of the vicissitudes requires a straddling of the present moment (the symptom, the reading of the symptom, and the writing of the symptom) and the instinct, which has become less distinguishable in the circuitousness of what it has undergone. The science of psychoanalysis distinguishes the instinct, but the instinct is only distinguishable as "instinct" by what it is yet to become as it undergoes first its vicissitudes, and, second, its marking, through the reading of the vicissitudes, by analysis and inscription. Freud's foregrounding of analysis itself serves as the primary ground for his theorisation of history. The analyst is an interpreter of

[4] De Certeau (1988: 292)

fragments: words, signs, and symptoms. At the conjunctions of present moments with an absent but indicated past, the analyst "elucidates."[5]

Elucidation and its triggering of narrative itself comprise only part of Freud's psychotherapeutic procedure. Freud's psychoanalytic discourse and narrative case studies and his discernible relation to his own writing practice, exemplify the historiographical operation that crafts history, as De Certeau elaborates in *The Writing of History*. The historiographical operation is primarily ambivalent, according to De Certeau, and, as a closer examination of Freud to his own writing will suggest, according to Freud too. This constitutive ambivalence is noted by De Certeau comprehensively:

> Such is the ambivalence of historiography: it is the condition of a process and the denial of an absence; by turns it acts as the discourse of a law (historical saying opens a present to be made) and as an alibi, a realistic illusion (the realistic effect creates the fiction of another history). It oscillates between 'producing history' and 'telling stories,' but without being reduced to either one or the other. (De Certeau 102)

The ambivalence of historiography could be said to be the ambivalence instated by its very performativity: if "history" comes into being through its own narrativity, then the narrator must counteract that constructedness of the writing operation with the authority of law (although this authority would also be based in performative reiteration.) The material of the historian, and the psychoanalyst, is the fragment, one of many pieces which, when gathered into collections and temporalized into narrative formation, are beholden to acts of both elucidating truth as well as fashioning a story. While we shall see that we can read the ambivalence Freud himself conveyed in his own writing as operation, De Certeau reminds us that it is the psychoanalytic method itself that allows us to understand the historiographic operation:

[5] De Certeau (1988:292) De Certeau cites Freud's use of the German word *Aufklären* to describe his own work as an analyst who "transform[s] the surface of verbal elements into a network of interrelations that organize the is surface, that articulate words as a function of lost or effaced things, and that turn the text into a deceptive sign of past events."

> [History] is no less subject to analysis, as another labor of the same formula: a little piece of truth (*ein Stücken Wahrheit, GW* 16:239) is endlessly being diffused within history's obscurantist repressions…" (De Certeau 315.)

Although De Certeau's exploration of the writing of history does not discuss Heidegger much, as a philosophy of productive ambivalences De Certeau's theorization of the writing of history does resonate with Heidegger's exposition of the fragment's relation to history in "The Anaxamander Fragment."[6] Of course, Heidegger's philosophical project in general, as well as this essay particularly, are too vast and layered to read in full depth here, but even a slight detour into a few of Heidegger's propositions yields clarification and company to the present investigation into Freud's articulation of history and the historiographical operation. Heidegger's essay builds around the Anaxamander Fragment as index to Western Metaphysics, to Thinking, to Being. "History" is one strand which Heidegger follows in order to grapple with the vast task of explaining Being. For Heidegger, the Anaxamander Fragment, a piece of a speech which he introduces as "the oldest fragment of Western thinking," (Heidegger 576) is the key to understanding the relation and role of history to Being. History as a notion and as a practice introduces what Heidegger calls the necessary "errancy" through which Being self-conceals itself. (Heidegger 591) For Heidegger, "history" is an inscribed materialisation of the error which Being and its essence hide within. This essence of Being must hide itself, but a certain understanding of history shows what Being is, and does. Heidegger's consideration of Being and history in the Anaxamander text will hopefully serve to enhance the primary thesis in the present paper that Freud's discourse of "vicissitudes" puts forth a particular understanding of "history."

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[6] Heidegger (1973/74: 576-626) It must be said here that Heidegger does not use the word "fragment" (the same word in German) to describe Anaxamander's text—instead, he uses, throughout the essay, the word *Spruch*, which can be understood as a meaningful speech. He does use the German word *fragment* in other examples, such as describing Heraclitis's text. Interestingly, in the original German, Heidegger's reading of the Anaxamander text is part of a set of essays, and this one comes at the end and is titled "*Anhang 1: Der Spruch des Anaximander _ abgebrochene Fassung,* which can be translated as something like "discontinued, interrupted draft/version/edition." Thus, the English word "Fragment" in the title might refer to Heidegger's own fragment, or, it might be poetic translators' license to characterise the Anaxamander speech, or, a bit of both. My sincere thanks to Marei Schweitzer for her enthusiastic and careful translation work.

Asking his readers how we are meant to receive, let alone translate, a fragment of a philosophical treatise from a historical and chronological distance of two thousand five hundred years (Heidegger 580), Heidegger puts forward a notion of history which would replace any more standard understandings of our current relation to an historical fragment as being far away, millennia away; in which we would address the fragment as "latecomers in a history now racing towards its end, an end which in its increasingly sterile order of uniformity brings everything to an end." Instead, he enquires, "does there lie concealed in the historical [*historisch*] and chronological remoteness of the fragment the historic [*geschichtliche*] proximity of something unsaid, something that will speak out in times to come?" (Heidegger 580) Here, something that is both unsaid as well as destined to speak, is not remote but a "proximity" characterised as "*geschichtliche*." The hiddenness of the instincts until they are re-routed as vicissitudes to be marked and inscribed, also carry a sense of inevitable destiny. The *Triebe* set narrative shoots and possibilities into motion noted by the analyst in historicizing hindsight. Both Heidegger and Freud appreciate the merged origins of *geschichte* with *geschick*.[7]

Heidegger's philosophy is dedicated to understanding Being as something which in its very essence hides itself from thinking. He taps the etymological convergence of *geschichte* and *geschicke* in order to present an understanding of Being's fundamental temporal disjunction, an essential projection into a time and place beyond "itself" and yet, genitively "of" itself. This projection happens at the "departure" of "the long-hidden destiny of Being": "What once occurred in the dawn of our destiny would then come, as what once occurred … at the departure of the long-hidden destiny of Being. The Being of beings is gathered… in the ultimacy of its destiny…" (Heidegger 582) In a sense, what distinguishes "Being" from "being" in Heidegger's philosophy is its inclusion of a projected inevitable moment which is only readable from the

[7] Here, I would like to include in its entirety the Translator's footnote which explains that only as a result of this fatefulness [*Geschick*] does something, in the case of the passage cited, the Greeks, become something in the historic [*geschichtlich*] sense: "*The words Geschick and Geschichte stem from the same root, schicken, (ge)schehen, and since the twelfth century share a rich history and fate. Schicken originally means "to put in order," later "to dispose" or "dispatch," and finally to prepare something so that it can be sent. "To send" and "to happen" are today the common meanings of schicken and geschehen, once closely related. Thus, what is sent our way, what happens, constitutes our history and makes out our fate; because of their peculiar Geschick, the Greeks remain geschichtlich." (TR, Heidegger (1973/74: 590)

perspective of that projected moment. Similarly, Freud can only read, and write, *Triebe* via *Treibschicksale*.

History, for Heidegger, is the "realm of error" which allows for the essential self-concealing of Being. Errancy (where history unfolds) plays out destiny (*geschikt*). The misinterpretation that characterises the realm of error realises the necessary "course" in which "destiny awaits what will become of its seed." (Heidegger 591) In this sense that errancy and misinterpretation comprise positive grounding for history as we know it, Heidegger might be said to join Freud and De Certeau as a fellow philosopher of history as productive ambivalence.

Thus far, I have considered Freud's *Triebe und Triebschicksale* as the fundamental ground for his articulation of a philosophy of history. As Michel De Certeau has elaborated, "history" is both "discursive," that is, running a course within its own "diegetic" time, and "narrative," referring to the inclusion of oppositional terms that, through the introduction and rationalisation of temporal differentiation, sets up an "interlocutionary" relationship between author and reader.[8] This relationship also produces authority on the part of the historian, who has found non-diegetic means for unifying opposite events. "Narrative" effects ambivalence, as De Certeau suggests:

> But this temporalization, skittering away as it does from rigorously imposed limits, creating a stage on which incompatible elements can be put into play together, indeed has to be paid for with its counterpart…it 'pretends' to be reasoning. To be sure, in maintaining the relation of a rationality with what takes place outside of it, on its borderlines, narrative preserves the possibility of a science or a philosophy…" (De Certeau 88-89)

De Certeau's characterisation of the temporalization of narrative "skittering away" from imposed limits is what allows for a story to be told, constructed by outside perspectives that have deployed figuration, groupings, as well as sequential progressions through tropes. This "skittering away" makes for good storytelling, and, also, in the context of the writing of history, the text produced "holds together the contradictions of this unstable time." (De Certeau 92)

[8] De Certeau (1988: 88-89) Here De Certeau explains that he is borrowing the term "diegetic" from Genette, and the term "interlocutors" from Benveniste.

Freud's relation to writing as a "historian" becomes evident when he ventures from writing psychoanalytic discourse into writing psychoanalytic narrative, presenting the new genre of the case history in his 1905 publication about an eighteen-year old girl, "Dora," who was sent to Freud by her father because of her symptoms of hysteria. The publication was entitled "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (*Bruchstück einer hysterie-analyse*).[9] While I will not delve deeply into the complex romantic narrative of the case itself here, I do want to focus closely on the Editor's Note and especially on Freud's Prefatory Remarks to this groundbreaking genre of narrative history. Reading these introductory supplemental texts, we can see that Freud not only theorises a philosophy of history, but is also highly conscious of the act of writing history. Freud's anxieties about his own position as "historiographer" indicate the ambivalence which has been opened up by De Certeau.

The Editor's Note which frames the case history of "Dora" contextualises its publication within Freud's other works. Closely following the letters that Freud wrote to his esteemed medical friend Fliess, Strachey mentions that the "Fragment of an Analysis" was written as a direct follow-up, and continuation, of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), and was also written concurrently with *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). Freud's letters to Fliess make clear that Freud had an active, even proactive, relation to publishing, using publishing to establish his proprietorship of what he firmly felt was a radical, important new scientific discourse. However, as noted by his Editor, Freud deferred publishing the case study of "Dora," which he referred to in his letters to Fliess as "Dreams and Hysteria," for four years. (Freud, *Fragment* 4-5.) In addition to this delay, Strachey notes, Freud makes the curious mistake three times in misattributing the year that he wrote the case study, dating it "1899" instead of "1900." (Freud, *Fragment* 5) Strachey was beginning to read Freud's own unconscious resistances. In his Prefatory Remarks to this text, Freud has given us plenty more of those resistances to elaborate upon.

Freud's introduction of the "case history" presented a new genre of psychoanalytic writing which would supplement the explanatory discourses he was already publishing. He is clearly anxious that his new genre's integrity be defended against what he imagines will be the

[9] Freud (1953-73: vol. VII)

blame and reproach of "narrow minded critics" (Freud, *Fragment* 7) who will have objected, Freud imagines, to the publication to the world of private, sexual stories of real people who might actually be recognised. Because the narration of Dora's hysteria is by its very definition of a psycho-sexual nature, Freud persistently defends the case history's disclosure of otherwise private topics; they are integral to his scientific approach. He admits that if his patients had known that their "admissions" would be published for scientific reasons, that they would not have spoken of those things, and, furthermore, if he had asked their permission to publish these admissions, he was certain they would be "quite unavailing." (Freud, *Fragment* 8) He insists that no one would be able to figure out Dora's true identity. Freud also predicted that many physicians will read the case study not "as a psychopathology of the neuroses, but as a *roman à clef* designed for their private delectation." (Freud, *Fragment* 9) A *roman à clef* is a romantic narrative based on real people (the indexical *clef*), but with fictionalised names. Freud's disavowal of the named *French* romantic genre here betrays his own ambivalence about himself as the writer of Dora's case history, the French signifying here an unspeakable (in German) sexuality with populist, prurient appeal.[10] And so as not to be taken for the author of a cheap sensationalist novel, Freud makes an assurance to his readers that he will guarantee the secrecy of his subjects even if it means he will have to restrict his material. After these disclaimers, he explains in detail his ways of having "overcome the *technical* difficulties of drawing up the report of this case history": he wrote down the notes from memory immediately after the sessions with "Dora" were finished, using exact words that she used to describe her dreams, thereby ensuring that the writing did not stray into fiction; the material was "grouped" around two anchoring dreams that she relayed; and finally, the treatment lasted only three months, fortuitously for practical reasons, thereby making the amount of material much more manageable in terms of constructing a narrative sequence. (Freud, *Fragment* 9-10) This latter element went very much against Freud's wishes: "Dora" broke off the analysis when, for Freud, it was just

[10] Freud often uses words in French unconsciously, as signifiers of an unspeakable sexual otherness, a highly sexualised femininity. Two particular examples within the case study itself of the "Fragment" are the following: explaining his frank and scientific approach in which he compares himself to a gynaecologist, Freud proudly tells his reader, "I call bodily organs and processes by their technical names, and I tell these to the patient if they—the names, I mean—happen to be unknown to her. *J'appelle un chat un chat*." And then he elaborates this point further: "No one can undertake the treatment of a case of hysteria until he is convinced of the impossibility of avoiding the mention of sexual subjects, or unless he is prepared to allow himself to be convinced by experience. The right attitude is: '*pour faire une omelette il faut casser des oeufs.'"* Freud (1953-73: vol VII, 48-49) Many thanks to Avital Ronell's insightful reading of these particular translingual repressions by Freud in relation to Dora. (Avital Ronell, lecture, "On the Fate of Sliding Signifiers," Fall 1994, New York University).

getting going, determining the case history a *Bruchstück* (broken piece) and setting into motion the ambivalence and deferral that Freud manifested in his relation to his own authorial practice, to his own historiographical operation. His strategy is to come forward and acknowledge his own role as inauthentic constructor, but a constructor who is an archaeologist, rather than a narrator of a novel: "I have restored what is missing, taking the best models known to me from other analyses; but, like a conscientious archaeologist, I have not omitted to mention in each case where the authentic parts end and my constructions begin." (Freud, *Fragment* 12)

Freud's discourse and practice of psychoanalysis are fundamentally "historical" in a perhaps particularly Germanic sense of the initial convergence of *geschichte* and *geschikt*. This essay has investigated "vicissitudes" and their relation to "instincts," as well as investigated vicissitudes in relation to writing, particularly, the writing of history. As Freud revealed in his preface to his first case history, the writer of history puts himself into a double bind: that of the faithfulness to what is only a fragment of authenticity; and, that of constructor of readable narrative. The ineluctable pull of narration—the groupings of words; the performativity or vicissitudinousness of the given figures; the proneness to genre—characterises the performative tendency towards "operation" that both Freud's editors and De Certeau have considered. De Certeau's summative pronouncement that "narrativity, the metaphor of performative discourse, finds its support precisely in what it hides…" speaks to the hiding of narrative's very performativity and recognises the productivity of ambivalence. My foray into a later German philosopher, Heidegger, served to enhance the philosophy of history that Freud already inaugurated through the *Triebeschisale*, but Heidegger also presents a version, albeit much grander, of productive ambivalence. Vicissitudes and their inscriptions can extend their performative tendencies into the realm of critical reading, encouraging our own productive ambivalences.

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