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ARCHAEOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS:

what is the inquiry searching for?

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Abstract

This article is a comparative reflection on the modes of inquiry proposed by two disciplines or practices which investigate the past, namely archaeology and psychoanalysis. These two types of regressive inquiry make use of present clues (material or psychological) in order to recover the past. However, beyond a superficial similarity, archaeology and psychoanalysis do not offer the same heuristic. This is not because they do not share the same objects, but rather because they do not have the same representation and the same practice of the processes of burial and recovery of their respective objects. Through discussion of the "hyperarchaeological" hermeneutics put forward by Jean Laplanche, this article pleads in favour of a mosaic history which enables us to bring together in one narrative the becoming of an object as well as each of its remains and memories.

The inquiry is the format necessary for the search for things past. It is the heuristic technique which aims to produce a plausible story that brings together on one plane the clues available in the present: physical remains, intact or fragmentary, or which exist as negatives, texts in the form of documents or as stories, written or oral, static or performed, traces of gestures or intention, rituals, words or linguistic structures, all sorts of acts of the mind, memories, symptoms. This paper is a comparative exploration of the modes of inquiry offered by two practices which explore the past: archaeology and psychoanalysis. While aware of the previous reflections on this subject, these pages focus on confronting an illusion: that the investigative procedures differ according to whether the remains to be recovered are material or psychological. This is not the case. The inquiry's methods are not determined by the nature of the object. On the contrary, it is the methods which inform the discursive structure of the recovered object (in other words, what can be said about it). Ultimately, this means that an archaeological approach can easily be applied to other fields within the humanities. To begin, since it is always advisable to present one's project at the start, my aim is to contribute to the re-evaluation of archaeology's position and role, not simply as a discipline which generates data, but as an investigative and discursive practice (for a recent take on this subject, see Boissinot, 2015).

1 - Inquiry, evidential paradigm and escape of the object

It goes without saying that we never access the past itself; we elucidate it using clues which have survived into the present. Archaeology and psychoanalysis are two forms (among others) of elucidation of the past. Clearly, in these forms of investigation there are contemporary variants

of the "evidential paradigm" identified by Carlo Ginzburg (1989 [1986]). This evidential paradigm was born concurrently with Freud, Conan Doyle and Bertillon in the 1870s (and finds a brilliant literary incarnation in Proust's *Remembrance of things past*, Ginzburg adds). It is the epistemological template as much responsible for technocracy as for psychoanalysis and the crime novel (which are, I am inclined to add, the three pillars of our modernity). There is no doubt that in promoting the inquiry as a means of comprehending reality and a privileged form of narrative (as demonstrated by the omnipresence of police and medical drama series in our imaginations), the evidential paradigm has selected, from a few chosen disciplines, forms of obsessional searches which defer the pleasure of revealing the past, through the accumulation of precautions and protocol. This is a point of convergence between archaeology and psychoanalysis which Jean-Paul Demoule (2003) quite rightly highlighted. Although it is of course not the case in the field of police inquiries (where the goal of the investigation is to conclude by resolving the crime), individual neurosis was enlisted by disciplines which had succeeded in sublimating their object. Ultimately, the object of the inquiry, as well as the satisfaction it provides (and maybe even its usefulness), resides not so much in its outcome as in the inquiry itself. And yet, the object exists. Or, at least, something exists which fulfils the role of an object, even if it slips away during the inquiry which hopes to capture it, changing its shape as it is pushed towards a more distant horizon.

This escape of the object, common to both archaeology and psychoanalysis, means that the investigation is necessarily a progressive uncovering, or more specifically, a regressive inquiry. Among the very diverse methods of elucidating the past (find, discover, reveal, expose present remains, to reveal, recreate, bring forth, or reconstruct past states) – and all these words, all these actions do not mean the same thing – archaeology and psychoanalysis seem at first glance to share the same mode of inquiry. But let us examine this more closely.

2 - Regressive inquiry: the buried object towards which it regresses

Since clues are the basis of every inquiry, and since clues are by definition the remains of past things and relationships, every inquiry is in some way the recovery of a lost time, which no longer exists in its complete form in the present in which the inquiry takes place. However, although the objective of every inquiry is to recover something from the past – especially police or judicial inquiries, which resolve a murder or judge a crime, respectively – not every inquiry is necessarily regressive. An inquiry is only regressive if its procedures, organisation and narrative have an end goal within which resides its satisfaction, and whereby the possibility of immediate satisfaction has been suspended. This is not the case in an inquiry whose logical sequence involves obtaining – here and now – a confession, whether given by the guilty party or deduced using other means, of a crime or a case, or more generally in any inquiry with the inherent constraint of the resolution of an enigma. Carlo Ginzburg, in his analysis of the conviction without proof of Adriano Sofri, a far-left militant charged in 1990 with the assassination of a police officer 18 years earlier, clearly demonstrated the different modes of truth in judicial and historical inquiries (Ginzburg, 1997 [1991]). Freed of the presentist logic of the "solution" to a current problem, archaeology and psychoanalysis set themselves the goal, not of satisfying immediate demands, but of recovering for themselves the earlier states of reality, replacing the overhanging present with an escape towards an attainable point of origin – or one which is thought to be so.

Whether they are material on the one hand or immaterial on the other, these former states of reality have characteristics which seem similar at first glance: they are buried remains, brought to light by the work of the researcher. However, on closer inspection, is being buried a necessary characteristic? It is not, for example, in the case of a medieval building whose elevations reveal earlier architectural states, or in that of living languages which are used by linguists to reconstruct lost protolanguages. As regards the processes by which remains are buried, are they really the same when we are talking about material and psychological objects? Or, in other words: do memories rise to the surface in the same way as potsherds? Can we even say that material remains *rise* to the surface, or are simply revealed by the archaeologist, when, like mnesic traces, they are remains which only exist through an interpretative operation which reconstructs the lived past (Olivier, 2008)? Is it the same thing, for a past state of reality, to be *discovered* in fragmentary form (as is typically the case in archaeology) or to have been subject to a *repression*, which nevertheless preserves it intact and potentially copresent with the current world (as is the case in psychoanalytic theory)? In short, beyond the metaphors, which illustrate the limitations of language as much as disciplinary prejudices, it must be possible to say something more specific about the burial of traces of the past, about the ways in which remains are preserved, or even about their relation-ships with posterity.

3 - Psychoanalysis and archaeology: two sidesteps to escape history

In a paper published in 1991 in the *Revue française de psychanalyse*, the great French psycho-analyst Jean Laplanche noted the conflict between two theories of analytic interpretation: that of anamnesis (i.e. the removal through the work of analysis of the amnesia which obscures the patient's personal history, thereby enabling their recovery), and that of creative hermeneutics (i.e. the interpretative action of analysis whereby a useful fantasy is constructed, which did not exist prior to its pronouncement). The third option proposed by Laplanche is of interest to us, as it enables us to ask the question – albeit in rather clumsy terms at first – of what differentiates the various practices of recovery of the past.

In the terms of this conflict between fact and discourse – which already featured in Freud's work – it is possible to identify a debate which regularly stirs up the historical discipline. (Let us note in passing that, although the relationships between history and psychoanalysis have been the subject of much literature, this has almost exclusively been focused on debating the driving forces of individual action and the usefulness of analytic uses in history, and rarely on questioning the heuristic benefits of the inquiry; by way of introduction, see Dosse, 2002; Anheim, 2011). All the more so, because, for Laplanche, these two theories are overly tied to historical locatable conceptions of the truth (in other words: the objective truth versus a narrative which enables us to access the past), and so it is better to get rid of them and to look for something else. Out with history, therefore. To further free psychoanalytic interpretation from the shadow of history, Laplanche suggests looking to archaeology. Very well. But not "modern" archaeology (and by that, he means the archaeology of André Leroi-Gourhan), for that archaeology would only get caught up in "bundles of relationships and techniques", would be incessantly "didactic", and would sterilise wonder "with heavy use of maps, diagrams and charts" in order to encase "the vase or statue [...] in the invention of the potter's wheel and the trade of clay or tin" (Laplanche, 1991). Laplanche's criticism may seem paradoxical, insofar as it devalues an economy of delayed satisfac-tion which actually tends towards making this modern archaeology converge with the intended purpose of analysis. However, if we look more closely, what really takes place is another sidestep:

to appropriate an archaeology which is not that of the archaeologists (or at least not of today's archaeologists) for the benefit of psychoanalysis, is a way of distancing oneself from a discipline perceived – rightly or wrongly – as being swollen by useless technical aspects and hindered by history. Out with history, therefore, once again.

It is interesting that in both psychoanalysis and archaeology, we can identify a desire to create and demonstrate a heuristic originality by setting themselves apart from history. That is not the subject of this paper, however. Seemingly, for one of the great contemporary theorists of psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytic methods for recovering the past resemble a different archaeology; one which, Laplanche emphasises with delight, fully accepts its three founding fathers: the traveller, the looter and the art-lover. This is a far cry from the modern sophistication inspired by prehistoric archaeology's stratigraphic method. And a far cry from the archaeology which recognises the geologist as its founding father. This is not simply down to ignorance or bad taste; the archaeology that is "useful" to psychoanalysis was already the same at the time of Freud: the archaeology of Troy, the Mycenaeans and Pompeii, as practised by Heinrich Schliemann, finder of Priam's treasure, or Arthur Evans, who excavated Knossos (Demoule, 2003). The psychoanalysts might be looking towards the archaeologists, but what they wish to see is very much beyond them.

4 - The archaeology of Freud and of Freudianism

Freud's interest in archaeology is well demonstrated by his library and by the hundreds of artefacts in his collection, which he displayed in his consulting rooms in Vienna and later in London (Yerushalmi, 1993; a useful synopsis of the exhibitions and catalogues by Armstrong, 1999; then, *inter alia*, Burke, 2006; Marinelli, 2009). Beyond the visual analogy between remains from humanity's past and scraps from an individual's past revealed by psychoanalysis, some have seen a metaphor which is of epistemological value (Spence, 1987; Kuspit, 1989; Bowdler, 1996; Thomas, 2009). Let us not move too quickly, however. While there is no doubt that this metaphor exists in psychoanalysis, and that it may have been fed by Freud's passion for antiquities as well as by his friendship with Emmanuel Loewy (Wolf, 1998) – a classical archaeologist, who was the first professor of archaeology and art history in Rome, before moving to Vienna – the epistemological permeability between the two then budding disciplines appears limited. In reality, the archaeology of Freud and Freudianism concentrates on three focal points which leave out most of the practical reality of archaeology.

First focal point: the archaeologist. Throughout all of Freud's work, the archaeologist is only represented as the discoverer of Troy, the Egyptologist, the looter of temples and tombs (with varying degrees of legitimacy), or perhaps the epigraphist, such as Champollion, who solves the mystery of an undeciphered writing system using just his genius. They are pioneers whose perseverance reveals whole buried worlds, and it is even better if, like Schliemann, they are confronted with the incredulity of the academic world of their time. A solitary discoverer, this archaeologist is the prototype of the founder, the idea of whom feeds Freud's intellectual ambition. It is moreover a model for the analyst, confronted with the defence mechanisms of the patient, which he will eventually overcome. However, the comparison does not go any further than the initial posture: nothing in Freud's writings brings us tangibly closer to the *work* involved in archaeological investigation. This is especially true in the case of Norbert Hanold, the lovesick archaeologist who is the main character in *Gradiva*, the novel by Wilhelm Jensen (1903), of whom Freud conducted a psychoanalytic literary study (Freud, 1907). Hanold does not conduct excavations; in modern-day

Pompeii, his character finds the woman he had seen in a dream, which had taken place in Pompeii, in 79 AD, and whom he had been unable to save from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. (We later discover that the woman was Zoë, a childhood friend whom he had completely forgotten, and whose memory was sparked by a Roman low-relief sculpture which had provoked the dream about Mount Vesuvius).

Second focal point: the chronological period. Freud and the subsequent psychoanalytic move-ment demonstrated a particularly strong preference for the Protohistoric and Classical periods in the Mediterranean and the Levant, namely the great civilisations of Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, pharaonic Egypt, the Aegean world, Greece and Italy. This has been noted on several occasions (for example, Corcoran, 1991 in relation to Egypt; D'Agata, 1994 in relation to the Aegean). Herein, there is – to use the analytic vocabulary – a screen which condenses all of psychoanalysis' interest in both the buried treasures and the halo of mystery which, on the threshold of civilisation, surrounds the origins of the great psychological universals (the Oedipus complex, infantile neurosis, etc.). In short, Classical archaeology is the nodal point where humanity, as it leaves infancy, suppresses the happy or traumatic memories of the primitive age. One can search psychoanalytic literature in vain for references to research in Prehistory, or an even rudimentary understanding of the major chrono-cultural categories of European Prehistory (categories which are created during Freud's time), or even an allusion to the major discoveries of European and world cave art sites, which could in fact have contributed to reflections on the animal totemism of the primitive horde.

Third and final focal point: the object. We would also search in vain, in psychoanalytic literature, for precise references to the stratigraphic or even (if we remain vague) cultural contexts in which objects were discovered. Having observed an indifference to the processes of burial and to that which could enable a genuine comparison with the procedures involved in covering up the past, Dietmar Schmidt pointed out that Freud was unaware of the archaeology of "refuse", developed in Berlin by Rudolf Virchow, an exact contemporary of Schliemann (Schmidt, 2001) – an archaeology which explored new categories of objects (tools, bones...) as well as the processes of stratification of remains and the sequential discontinuities within deposits (should we perhaps consider Virchow as a founding father of modern archaeology?). In any event, psychoanalysis is clearly only interested in the archaeology of the noble object, the unique object, the treasure; an archaeology we can call pre-evidential. It is necessary to return to the issue of the object of the inquiry, without prejudice and by trying to understand, beyond *what* archaeology and psychoanalysis find, *how* they find it.

5 - Archaeology and psychoanalysis: what do they find and how?

Even in our modern archaeology, there is still undeniably a temptation for an instantaneous reveal, though this is certainly suppressed by science. Setting aside the reality of looting, this temptation can be seen in certain areas of professional archaeology, and particularly in those focused on the Mediterranean worlds of the Protohistoric and Classical periods, where the work essentially involves removing the sediment which has built up around a ruin, whose content or inscriptions will soon reveal a mystery. If such a procedure seems outdated today, this is not simply because it favours the objects to the detriment of the clues; there is also the apparent shame of giving in to instant satisfaction. Indeed, it is this relationship between the clue and the object which appears to be fundamentally different in archaeology and in psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis, the clues given by the patient's resistances inform us about the object at the same time as they

obscure it, and thus lose all heuristic benefit as soon as the object can be recovered. This is nothing like modern archaeology, where the clue is itself an object of knowledge. A methodological consequence of this is that the archaeologist becomes a typologist of static clues (tool, table ware, jewellery, cooking residues, etc.) which are his or her objects of study, while the analyst adopts an approach whereby the value of the clues changes as the inquiry progresses.

This initial dichotomy gives rise to a second. When describing the recovery procedure he is developing, in *Studies on Hysteria* (Freud, Breuer, 1895; on this work and its context, see chapter 3 of the intellectual biography of Freud by Roudinesco, 2014), Freud writes that it involves "clearing away the pathogenic psychic material layer by layer" to uncover the buried memories, as one would do when excavating a city. It is clear that the layers of psychic material are seen here as sediment which hinders the discovery of the object, and not as the very condition for the archaeological deposit's existence. The implication, in topical terms, regarding the processes by which remains are buried, is that the analyst works to remove sedimentation within which he or she can nevertheless recognise vestigial remains, while the archaeologist (even Schliemann) aims to document through excavation the strata which form part of the continuous historical truth of the object, and at the same time, of the discontinuous processes of burial. Although in both cases the recovery destroys some "layers", excavation reveals an object which is always already damaged and in *stratigraphy*, while psychoanalysis reveals an intact object, through *anamnesis.*

Let us go a little further, in an attempt to compare, not simply the work of the investigator or the topic of the site of the inquiry, but rather the processes by which an object is buried. As we saw with the lovesick archaeologist, the intact object, which psychoanalysis recovers, is a repressed childhood memory. It also appears that the story began and ended in Pompeii. It is clear that, in the archaeological allegory used in psychoanalysis, the image of the Roman city destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD is a recurring one. It is interesting that this borderline case and virtually unique event in archaeology serves as an exemplum. In his case history of "Rat Man" (1909), Freud says he showed the patient the classical statuettes in his consulting room, explaining that they had been preserved intact thanks to their being buried in the tomb. He illustrated his statement by taking the example of Pompeii, a sort of archaeological prototype for the psychic "site" which is observed as an unconscious formation miraculously found under layers of volcanic ash (Freud, paraphrased here after Bowdler, 1996). In his own rephrasing of this paradigm of burial and recovery in psychoanalysis, Laplanche speaks of a "psychic phenomenon which is simultaneously a cataclysm (like the burial of Pompeii) and a definitive preservation (as in the entombment of Tutankhamun's belongings)" (Laplanche, 1991: 1305). An informative detail is worth noting in passing: Freud continued his explanation to the patient by saying that the true destruction of Pompeii was only just beginning, with the excavation of the archaeological remains, in an effort to illustrate the difference between the integrity of unconscious memory and the reshuffled nature of recollections (Freud, once again paraphrased after Bowdler, 1996; and remarks by Laplanche, 1991: 1305). By suggesting nonchalantly that everything is worthy of being destroyed (by archaeologists) because the main part has been saved (by the cataclysm), Freud's way of thinking demonstrates what distinguishes – in his eyes – psychoanalysis from archaeology. In response, the archaeologist would promptly declare that everything is worthy of being saved (by him or her), because the main part has already been destroyed (by the cataclysm). The whole economy of the integrity of an object is therefore in completely opposite grounds in these two modes of inquiry.

6 - Analytical hyperarchaeology, really? The vestige as a relic

We had left Jean Laplanche as he was eyeing up archaeology, although it was in fact an archaeology that is not that of the archaeologists. Without going into an analysis of the interpretative concept that he sketches out, it is interesting to note that his rejection of "modern" archaeology does not stem from a naive understanding of the object of the inquiry. Laplanche suggests putting the human being on a level with a "hyperarchaeological site", and explores a striking and oft-quoted passage from Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents* on the "manner in which the past is preserved":

"Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and that the castle of S. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege by the Goths, and so on. But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand – without the Palazzo having to be removed – the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms [...]. Where the Coliseum now stands we could at the same time admire Nero's vanished Golden House. On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of to-day, as it was bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa; indeed, the same piece of ground would be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built. And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other" (Freud, 1961: 17).

However, this holographic metaphor, which does justice to the various facets and transformations of the psychical object through time – what we could call its *taphonomy* –, is not wholly satisfactory for Jean Laplanche. In his view, what are missing are the major stages, the transitions – we could say the *stratigraphy* which punctuates and organises the deposits and corresponds to the "nodal points" of the analytic inquiry. Also missing are the episodes of manipulation, the coexistence of "veracity and artifice" in an object – an object "which is not simply a thing, but which contains within it the time of its construction, the affective reactions which it provoked and probably more besides" (quoted or paraphrased after Laplanche, 1991: 1304-1306). Paradoxically, the way in which the analyst uses this *hyperarchaeology* contains several characteristics found in modern archaeology, as they are produced by the inseparable duo of stratigraphy and taphonomy (the first published use of the latter dates to exactly one year after Freud's death, in an article in English by Efremov in the journal *Pan-American Geologist*; Efremov, 1940). However, if we turn the proposition around, the metaphor also points towards an *archaeological hyperanalysis*, capable of imaging the material object in its reinvested dimensions: "*spolia*", of course, but also the replenishing of meaning which moves, unearths, erases, destroys, transforms, reappropriates, devaluates, invents and preserves earlier remains. A sort of augmented archaeology, in which the vestige is a relic, an object whose modes of investment over time give rhythm to the sequence of its existence.

7 - Back to the inquiry: milestones of a mosaic history

How does one narrate this phenomenology of the object through time, without being slave to just one of its dimensions, without having to choose between original intactness, and the forms and stages of deterioration? We have no choice but to turn back to the inquiry and its only true hero and narrator, the investigator. An investigator who does not pull blindly on a loose thread woven before them, who does not simply go back through the stratigraphy, who will not settle for merely removing built-up sand, but who will follow, through successive choices, intuition and lessons, a network of paths, to produce a mosaic history which is both informed by the multidimensionality of the past and by the subjectivity of the inquiry. "Mosaic history" therefore covers the double meaning of a historical exercise of devising a plot made from dispersed fragments, and a system of historicity which finds its niche in lived temporalities, in other words, in discontinuous time.

To conclude, I wish to present two such inquiries, which I believe to be two important milestones of this mosaic history. The first was conducted by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and published in 1941 under the title *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre sainte* (Halbwachs, 2008 [1941]). The work has been heavily criticised for its shortcomings and inaccuracies (for a review of the 2008 reedition and a study of the work's critical reception, see Iogna-Prat, 2011). Although the text does not live up to the potential of its very project, it is nevertheless a fine example of a regressive approach which combines archaeological and psychoanalytic resources in order to individualise the strata of memory by which, over the past two thousand years, the topography of Christian sacred sites in Jerusalem and Palestine has been transformed. The second milestone of this mosaic history is a story linked to Moses, which comes from the German archaeologist (Egyptologist, to be precise) Jan Assmann, under the title *Moses the Egyptian* (Assmann, 1997). What exactly does this history book discuss? The subtitle of the French translation leaves little doubt: *Un essai d'histoire de la mémoire* (Assmann, 2001), "an essay on the history of memory". The German subtitle, however, *Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur*, "decoding the traces of a memory" reveals more about the mobilisation of the heuristic resources of epigraphy, archaeology and psychoanalysis. Assmann is not interested in Moses the historical figure, or in Moses as a figure of Judaism. Nor is he interested in how the figure of Moses was depicted in literature or art. In short, we are dealing with neither religious history, nor biblical archaeology, nor Egyptology, nor a history of mentalities. Assmann observes, or rather reconstructs, the network of traces left across time, throughout the last 3 500 years, by the memory of the radical invention of monotheism. In other words, the memory of the sidelining of polytheistic, idolatrous and abundant Egypt, instigated by Akhenaten in the 14th century BC, a memory which is renewed in the form of the Exodus and in all subsequent thinking, including that of Freud, on the significance and influence of this revolution. It is a memory by turns repressed, shifted, reused, condensed, transmuted, but which signals the astounding mark left by pharaonic Egypt on the world and the emancipating cataclysm which both buries and liberates. Moses is not the subject whose history is retraced; Moses is the name given to this memory.

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