

[...] At the beginning of chapter 6 of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), Freud pretends to worry. Is he not investing in useless expenditure? Is he not in the process of mobilizing a ponderous archiving machine (press, printing, ink, paper) to record something which in the end does not merit such expense? Is not what he is preparing to deliver to the printers so trivial as to be available everywhere? The Freudian lexicon here indeed stresses a certain 'printing' technology of archivization (*Eindruck, Druck, drücken*), but only so as to feign the faulty economic calculation. Freud also entrusts to us the 'impression' (*Empfindung*), the feeling inspired by this excessive and ultimately gratuitous investment in a perhaps useless archive:

In none of my previous writings have I had so strong a feeling [*Empfindung*] as now that what I am describing is common knowledge [*allgemein Bekanntes*] and that I am using up paper and ink [*Papier und Tinte*] and, in due course, the compositor's and printer's work and material [*Setzerarbeit und Druckerschwärze aufbieten*] in order to expound things which are, in fact, self-evident [*um eigentlich selbstverständliche Dinge zu erzählen*].

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 117

In sum, this is a lot of ink and paper for nothing, an entire typographical volume, in short, a material substrate which is out of all proportion, in the last analysis, to 'recount' (*erzählen*) stories that everyone knows. But the movement of this rhetoric leads elsewhere. Because Freud draws another inference, in the retrospective logic of a future perfect: *he will have to have invented* an original proposition which will make the investment profitable. In other words, he will have to have found something new in psychoanalysis: a mutation or a break within his own theoretical institution. And he will have not only to have announced some news, but also to have archived it: to have put it, as it were, to the press:

For that reason I should be glad to seize the point if it were to appear that the recognition of a special, independent aggressive instinct [*eines besonderen, selbständigen Aggressionstriebes*] means an alteration of the psycho-analytic theory of the instincts.

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 117

The rhetoric and the logic of this paragraph are vertiginously cunning. All the more wily because they feign disarmed naïveté. In what can also be read as a theatricalizing of archivization, Freud seems at first to perform a courteous *captatio benevolentiae*, a bit like the one I owe you here: in the end I have nothing new to say. Why detain you with these worn-out stories? Why this wasted time? Why archive this? Why these investments in paper, in ink, in characters? Why mobilize so much space and so much work, so much typographic composition? Does this merit printing? Aren't these stories to be had everywhere?

If it is not without perversity, this *captatio benevolentiae* turns out to be *itself* a useless expenditure, the fiction of a sort of 'rhetorical question'. Immediately afterwards, Freud suggests in effect that this archivization would not be so vain, and a *pure loss*, in the hypothesis that it would cause to appear what in fact he already knows he will cause to appear, and thus this is not a hypothesis for him, a hypothesis submitted for discussion, but rather an irresistible thesis, namely the possibility of a radical perversion, indeed, a diabolical death drive, an aggression or a destruction drive: a drive, thus, of loss. The rest of the chapter recalls everything which had already, since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), more than ten years earlier, introduced this destruction drive in the psychic economy, or rather the psychic aneconomy, in the accursed share of this pure-loss expenditure. Freud draws the conclusion here with respect to civilization, and indeed to its discontents, while at the same time giving himself over to a sort of autobiographical, theoretical, and institutional anamnesis. In the course of this recapitulation, he stresses above all the resistances that this death drive incites, *everywhere*, outside as much as inside, as it were, and in psychoanalytic circles as well as in himself:

I remember my own defensive attitude [*meiner eigenen Abwehr*] when the idea of an instinct of destruction first emerged in psycho-analytic literature, and how long it took before I became receptive to it.

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 120

He had previously made two remarks, as if in passing, of which we must not fail to take note. First of all, since overcoming this resistance, he can no longer think otherwise (*ich nicht mehr anders denken kann*). For Sigmund Freud himself, the destruction drive is no longer a debatable hypothesis. Even if this speculation never takes the form of a fixed thesis, even if it is never posited, it is another name for *Ananke*, invincible necessity. It is as if Freud could no longer resist, henceforth, the irreducible and originary perversity of this drive which he names here sometimes death drive, sometimes aggression drive, sometimes

destruction drive, as if these three words were in this case synonyms. Second, this three-named drive is mute (*stumm*). It is at work, but since it always operates in silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own 'proper' traces – which consequently cannot properly be called 'proper'. It devours it even before producing it on the outside. This drive, from then on, seems not only to be anarchic, anarchotic (we must not forget that the death drive, originary though it may be, is not a principle, as are the pleasure and reality principles): the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation.

Allowing for exceptions. But what are exceptions in this case? Even when it takes the form of an interior desire, the anarchy drive eludes perception, to be sure, save exception: that is, Freud says, except if it disguises itself, except if it tints itself, makes itself up or paints itself (*gefärbt ist*) in some erotic colour. This impression of erogenous colour draws a mask right on the skin. In other words, the archiviolithic drive is never present in person, neither in itself nor in its effects. It leaves no monument, it bequeaths no document of its own. As inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum, its pseudonym in painting, its sexual idols, its masks of seduction: lovely impressions. These impressions are perhaps the very origin of what is so obscurely called the beauty of the beautiful. As memories of death.

But, the point must be stressed, this archiviolithic force leaves nothing of its own behind. As the death drive is also, according to the most striking words of Freud himself, an aggression and a destruction (*Destruction*) drive, it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mneme* or *anamnesis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mneme* or to *anamnesis*, that is, the archive, consignment, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnema*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum. Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory.

There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.

Let us never forget this Greek distinction between *mneme* or *anamnesis* on the one hand, and *hypomnema* on the other. The archive is hypomnesic. And let us note in passing a decisive paradox to which we will not have time to return,

but which undoubtedly conditions the whole of these remarks: if there is no archive without consignment in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction. Consequence: right on that which permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than that which exposes to destruction, and in truth menaces with destruction, introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument. Into the 'by heart' itself. The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself.

The death drive tends thus to destroy the hypomnesic archive, except if it can be disguised, made up, painted, printed, represented as the idol of its truth in painting. Another economy is thus at work, the transaction between this death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros, but also between the death drive and this apparent dual opposition of principles, of *arkhai*, for example the reality principle and the pleasure principle. The death drive is not a principle. It even threatens every principality, every archontic primacy, every archival desire. It is what we will call, later on, *le mal d'archive*, 'archive fever'. [...]

Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995); trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 8–12.