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# A procedural model approach to Ricœur's epistemology of psychoanalysis: A methodological reflection around Freud's "Schreber Case"

**Abstract:** This chapter provides new perspectives of the Schreber case and on Freud's interpretation of the Schreber case, both as a peculiar clinical case and as a hermeneutical 'object' of analysis and reflection. The double-dimension psychoanalytic discourse propounded by Ricœur is here used to effectively work with hermeneutics, both as a specific methodological and epistemological discourse and as a field of pathological expression, and as a speculative and new conceptual net for the understanding of psychoses. Freud built a paradigmatic clinical report supporting his conjectures only in the reading of Schreber's *Memoir of my nervous illness*. Within the dialectical movement that spans from Schreber's *Memoir...* (with his specific contents and auto-interpretation) to Freud's psycho-analytical work of interpretation (which transforms the clinical subject of this *Memoir...* into a 'case history'), this chapter opens a problematic critical discourse in a productive tension with Freud's dual epistemology on the one side, and a philosophical and hermeneutical approach and understanding on the other, to clarify and deepen the theoretical and practical procedural consequences related to this duality, and intends to offer a renewed understanding of the general importance of hermeneutics in psychoanalysis and its particular significance in relation to a specific case history.

## 1 Introduction

This chapter provides new perspectives of Freud's approach to the Schreber case and on the Schreber case in itself, both as a peculiar clinical case and as a hermeneutical 'object' of analysis and reflection. The double-dimension psychoanalytic discourse propounded by Ricœur is here used to effectively work with hermeneutics, both as a specific methodological and epistemological discourse and as a field of pathological expression, as well as a speculative and new conceptual net for the understanding of psychoses. Freud built a paradigmatic clinical report supporting his conjectures only in the reading of Daniel P. Schreber's *Memoir of My Nervous Illness* (1903).

Within the dialectical movement that spans from Schreber's *Memoir* (with his specific contents and auto-interpretation) to Freud's psychoanalytical work of interpretation (which transforms the clinical subject of this *Memoir* into a new understanding, a 'case history'), this chapter opens a problematic critical discourse in productive tension with Freud's dual epistemology, on the one side, and a philosophical and hermeneutical approach and understanding, on the other, to clarify and deepen the theoretical and practical procedural consequences related to this duality. It also intends to offer a renewed understanding of the general importance and consistency of hermeneutics in psychoanalysis and its particular significance in relation to a specific pathology and case history.

Regarding methodology, our analysis proceeds in three steps. This first step consists of localizing each of the implicit methodological assumptions entailed in Freud's interpretation of Schreber's autobiographical report. The second step performs a phenomenological reduction, which leads us to a main premise consisting in uncovering the interrelationships between Schreber's biography—more specifically the 'libido frustrations' or *Versagungen*—and the 'work of the delusion-formation'—the *Wahnbildungsarbeit*. The third step consists in analyzing Ricœur's concepts of the *arc herméneutique*, *triple mimesis*, and *monde du texte*, Freud's methodological drawbacks.

## 2 Freud's reading of Schreber's autobiographical report, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*: A methodological critical review

As a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, one of my main interests that led me to set out on this difficult path bridging the *clinical* and the *epistemological* was the following question: *what is involved in the procedures of interpreting psychotic's clinical material?* In which way has Freud's interpretation of Schreber's autobiography influenced many of the main psychoanalytical concepts? In which way have these procedures—in which we highlight the *textual mediation*—determined the conceptual net with which we understand the clinical phenomena? Is it scientifically possible to support these assumptions? Moreover, what led me to start this research many years ago was the fact that Freud never carried out a systematic reflection on the *method* involved in his numerous analyses of the *written texts*, nor did he ever meet Schreber in person.

We shall see that in the writing of this paradigmatic psychosis case there is a convergence of both Ricœur's epistemological point of view of psychoanalysis—

understood as a *mixed discourse* between *energetic* and *hermeneutic* aspects—and its practical manifestation on the methodological plane in analyzing a specific piece of writing such as Dr. Schreber's autobiography.

In the correspondent case history of Schreber, Freud himself was not sure about referring to his reading of *Memoirs* as a method of “interpretation,” if we take it as presented paradigmatically in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for example.<sup>1</sup> Freud proposes, in attempting this type of interpretation, a two-pronged approach: “from the patient's own delusional utterances or from the exciting causes of his illness.”<sup>2</sup> That is why the methodological problems enter in the subtle transition between the *Memoirs* and Freud's case history.

If we follow Freud to the letter, we discover the following difficulty in his method of reading the *Memoirs*: if the usual psychoanalytical technique is fundamentally based on what resists it—and note that without this consideration the very concept of “analysis” loses its foundation, as Derrida lucidly affirms<sup>3</sup>—is it right to apply it to the writing of a paranoid man in whom there were apparently no resistances to overcome, according to Freud himself?

Furthermore, the so-called “facts” of psychoanalysis do not appear if a point of view is not adopted and a method determined that Freud, strictly speaking, only conceptualized for the “instance of dialogue” in analysis in a therapeutic situation, namely “free association.”<sup>4</sup> Clearly here we can see the opposition between two forms of discourse, oral and written, each of which leads to different forms of interpretation.

## 2.1 “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” as a preface to the Schreber case history

After researching Freud's *Correspondence* with Jung, we have found that “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” was conceived as a *Preface* to Schreber's Case History. This essay shows that Freud always maintained his concept of “reality” based—at least—on the German terms *Wirklichkeit* and *Realität*. Freud usually used *Wirklichkeit* to designate objective material reality, the physical existence of things; *Realität* tends to refer more to “psychic reality,” the realm of unconscious fantasies.<sup>5</sup> As Busacchi points out, “a psychoanalytical

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1 Freud, “The Interpretation of Dreams.”

2 Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 35.

3 Derrida, *Resistencias del psicoanálisis*, 37–43; *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, 19–25.

4 Ceriotto, *Fenomenología y psicoanálisis*, 154.

5 Iglesias Colillas, *¿Qué significa analizar?*, 39.

fact is not observable in the same way as a physical fact,”<sup>6</sup> since psychoanalysis “works more essentially in the realm of signification than biology.”<sup>7</sup>

This distinction between *Wirklichkeit* and *Realität* has important conceptual and clinical consequences. First, the principle of reality does not refer exactly to a kind of adaptation to objective material reality (*Wirklichkeit*) but quite the contrary: Freud sustains that the absence of expected satisfaction, *frustration*—more precisely “privation” (*Versagung*)—arises because of the abandonment of the hallucinatory satisfaction of desire.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Methodology and construction of the Schreber case

We shall, unfortunately, be compelled to treat this subject far too briefly, offering only the main conclusions, as it can be treated properly only by giving long catalogues of facts that we have harvested after a careful study of Freud’s case history. We will now attempt a reading that will allow us to survey and uncover the *fundamental methodological premises* that hold up the case history, to then analyze them from the perspective of Ricoeur’s textual hermeneutics in the following sections. This works as the immediate step prior to the transition to the epistemologically clarifying of the case history. It is first necessary to take apart, one by one, the premises that Freud formulates in his *interpretative process*—or ‘reading operation’—in Ricoeurian terms.

## 2.3 First methodological premise

The *first methodological premise*, and perhaps the most important, is that which establishes that “a written report or a printed case history can take the place of personal acquaintance,”<sup>9</sup> due to the premise that it is not possible to force the internal resistance of paranoiacs. Freud justifies the *substitution* of the personal encounter with Schreber with the analysis and interpretation of a written text.

Take the following premise: paranoiacs “possess the peculiarity of betraying (in a distorted form, it is true) precisely those things which other neurotics keep hidden as a secret.”<sup>10</sup> This presupposes that paranoia is also governed by uncon-

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6 Busacchi, “Habermas and Ricoeur’s Depth Hermeneutics,” 104.

7 Busacchi, “Habermas and Ricoeur’s Depth Hermeneutics,” 104.

8 Freud, “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,” 219.

9 Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 9.

10 Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 9.

scious mechanisms that show those “translucent elements” that are presented in a “distorted” (*ensteller*) form. But if we substitute personal acquaintance with the interpretation of a written report, we must ask what it is that substitutes here the *psychoanalytic method* based on the “face to face,” the “free association.”

This same interpretative maneuver implied by dealing exclusively with a written text is then the same that arises in the question of the clarification and delimitation of the methodological paths that allow us to retrace the so-called “distortion.” It is quite justified to say that it is a question of approaching “textual distortion.”

## 2.4 Second methodological premise

The *second methodological premise* is presented to us split into *two elements* that deserve to be set apart, where the *first* is presented as an “axiom,” that is, a general and universal postulate about the study of psychotic subjectivity. On the one hand, this implies affirming that even paranoia delusions, extraordinary as they may be, originate in instinctual impulses that Freud claims are universal. “The psychoanalyst [...] approaches the subject with a suspicion that even thought-structures so extraordinary as these and so remote from our common modes of thinking”—i.e., *delusional formations*—“are nevertheless derived from the most general and comprehensible impulses of the human mind.”<sup>11</sup>

The *second* element—which is more specifically the methodological premise *per se*—concerns the desire to know how and for what “reasons” these instinctual impulses have “transformed” into this mode of presentation, i.e., the delusional formation. “With this aim in view,” Freud continues, “[the analyst] will wish to go more deeply into the details of the delusion and into the history of its development.”<sup>12</sup> Going deeply into the “history of its development” refers to the meticulous study of Schreber’s biography and includes all the elements of the material that appear related with certain “delusion details,” especially those that are insisted on and repeated most often.

In short, the idea that “what is not remembered is repeated in acts,” to quote an evident conclusion that can be drawn from *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through* (1914), to mention just one of the early texts of the “Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis,” is also valid among the generations of a family and the vicissitudes of their family tree (we may think

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11 Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 18.

12 Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 18.

here of Schreber's elder brother, Gustav) or in terms of the history of a people.<sup>13</sup> These concepts justify the interest in "the history of development" and in the "details of the delusion," as here we find the "most general and comprehensible impulses of the human mind."

## 2.5 Third methodological premise

The *third methodological premise* picks up on this question of "what is repeated," but *in the text*. Recall that there are certain "key words" in Schreber's text: "soul-murder," "God's rays," "transformation into a woman," "bliss," "tested souls," "basic language," "nerves," and "voluptuousness." Of all these, Freud especially highlights the "transformation into a woman,"<sup>14</sup> as the most striking and insistent element in the writing. In fact, this element functions for Freud as the cornerstone of his whole process of interpretation.

This premise requires then that we treat with special attention and maximum detail the fragments of the text that are *repeated* and *insisted on* most often. It is following this logic that Freud highlights the "transformation into a woman," because of the treatment this element receives in the text, aside from the "meaning" or "signification" that may be attributed to it. This implies, to begin with, highlighting the form of the discourse over its *content*. In Benveniste's terms, giving greater relevance to the *enunciation*—in the first place—than to the *utterances* themselves, which Freud would later interpret. Hence Freud calls the "transformation into a woman" the salient feature, the earliest germ of the delusional formation and the only element, furthermore, that persisted after Schreber's cure.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.6 Fourth methodological premise

The *fourth methodological premise* distinguishes "two angles" for approaching Schreber's text: the *first* aims to directly interpret the "delusional phrases" as they appear in the text, while the *second* aims to study the actual events, which can be placed in objective material reality, and which trigger the crises. This strategy makes it possible to lay bare "the familiar complexes and motive

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<sup>13</sup> Freud, *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*, 145–156. For an interpretation of Freud's text in Ricœur's *oeuvre*, see p. 203–224 of the contribution by Michael Funk Deckard in Part II.

<sup>14</sup> Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes," 33.

<sup>15</sup> Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes," 33.

forces of mental life.” Also operating here again are the two concepts of “reality,” the *Wirklichkeit* and *Realität* that we found in the “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,”

But Freud also maintains that Schreber “presses the key into our hands,” adding a *delusional phrase*, “a gloss, a quotation or an example,” or “expressly denying some parallel to it that has arisen in his own mind.” On some occasions, Freud also appears to appeal to the mode of functioning of the “denial”<sup>16</sup> as another valid resource for deciphering the text, especially when referring to those occasions when it is enough to withdraw the “express denials” that arise in Schreber at some “parallel.”

The use of “parallels” as a method of interpretation is a very ancient technique that can be traced back at least to Aristotle’s thinking, especially in his writing on the technique of dream interpretation.<sup>17</sup> This sequence concludes provisionally, then, in the sought *translation* (*Übersetzung*.)

But what kind of “translation” is it? Here Freud did nothing but retrace, walk back through the *methods of disfiguration* of the paranoid mode of expression to redirect them to the familiar complexes found in other neuroses, such as the father complex. Furthermore, this method in turn makes it possible to lay bare the *motive forces* in play behind the paranoid discourse.

But it is also true that Freud himself warns that his method is atypical and mentions some qualms: he notes that he goes beyond “typical instances of interpretation,” stressing that “his listeners or readers will only follow him as far as their own familiarity with analytic technique will allow them.”<sup>18</sup>

However, in not thematizing the difference between “listener” and “reader,” or likewise, not distinguishing conceptually between spoken and written discourse (text), does Freud not throw a shroud of darkness over the possibility of explaining the method of interpretation of the *Memoirs*?

Furthermore, it is necessary to reflect on Schreber’s use of quotations, following Prado de Oliveira’s work. According to Freud, as we have seen, the quotation is no more than a way for Schreber to give us a “key” to the interpretation. For Prado de Oliveira, Schreber’s book is a product of his extensive reading, and all the authors quoted by Schreber are part of “a school of which Bachofen, also a magistrate, is the greatest expression. He preached for the reconstruction, be-

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16 These notions are more fully expressed in the 1925 text “Negation.” For a broader analysis of the modes of negation in Freud’s thinking, see the chapter, “La escritura de la afección: sobre las modalidades de la negación entre las neurosis y las psicosis,” in Iglesias Colillas, *¿Qué significa analizar?*

17 Aristotle, “De la adivinación durante el dormir,” 119.

18 Freud, “Psycho-analytic notes,” 36–37.

yond the ancient civilizations, of a kingdom of women, of a sensual, disorderly matriarchy.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the *Memoirs* can be understood “from the works to which they refer, whether manifestly or latently.”<sup>20</sup>

We must recall that Freud maintains that, to take one example, “Schreber illustrates the nature of soul-murder by referring to the legends embodied in Goethe’s *Faust*, Byron’s *Manfred*, Weber’s *Freischutz*, etc.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Freud calls the interpretation based on a quotation as “illustrated,” this being one of the textual interpretation methods of the *Memoirs*.<sup>22</sup>

Towards the notion of *translation*, it is interesting to add here Jean Allouch’s observation that neither Freud nor Lacan specified the use of terms like “translation” or “transcription,” although they both used them frequently. For example, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud refers to “translation,” but he does not refer to the transmission of a meaning from one language to another. Rather, he refers to the deciphering of Champollion’s deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.7 Fifth methodological premise

The *fifth methodological premise* posits that, “it is legitimate to judge paranoia on the model of the dream.” If we recall here that the nucleus of Schreber’s “delusion-formation” is his relationship with his first doctor, that is, Professor P. E. Flechsig, we must stress that the very notion of “work of delusion-formation” (*Wahnbildungsarbeit*) is a direct reference to this dream model to render the delusion intelligible, that is, to make it methodologically accessible to the interpretative process.

Therefore, it is necessary to conceive these two postulates together: *it is legitimate to judge paranoia on the model of the dream* and the “work of delusion-formation” (*Wahnbildungsarbeit*). I will explain why below. Recall the passage that refers to the latter aspect:

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19 Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 47.

20 Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 31.

21 Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 42 (emphasis added).

22 Prado de Oliveira writes that Schreber “attains excellence in the art of the quotation: the *Memoirs* are full of quotation marks, and the quotations are the marks of all that men read in the constellations of signifiers” (Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 64).

23 Allouch, *Letra por letra*, 17.



Of the actual nature of Flechsig's enormity and its motives the patient speaks with the characteristic vagueness and obscurity which may be regarded as marks of an especially intense work of delusion-formation, if it is legitimate to judge paranoia on the model of a far more familiar mental phenomenon—the dream. Flechsig, according to the patient, committed, or attempted to commit, 'soul-murder' upon him [...].<sup>24</sup>

The German word *Wahnbildungsarbeit*, meaning “work of delusion-formation” is close in conceptual terms to *Traumarbeit*, the work of the dream. If we examine the word *Wahnbildungsarbeit* (literally, *Wahn*: delusion; *Bildung*: creation, foundation, formation; *Arbeit*: work, labor, job, effort), we must highlight that *Arbeit* in German indicates a *job*, in this case a *subjective job*. Unlike many contemporary psychiatrists, Freud does not use the German word *Wahnsinn*—delusion—but almost always uses this compound form: *Wahnbildungsarbeit*, stressing in this way the activity and the subjective implication of the psychotic in the production of their delusion-formation.

## 2.8 Sixth methodological premise

Lastly, the *sixth methodological premise* proposes a crossed reading between Schreber's *biography* and his *delusion*: “As we know, when a wishful phantasy makes an appearance, our business is to bring it into connection with some *frustration*, some privation in real life.”<sup>25</sup> In the quotation we can see how the notion functions in an articulated way that paranoia *represents* certain conflicts in the form of the *text of the dream*—hence the material could be “distorted”—and furthermore an explanation of the central interpretative task of how to work this crossover between *biography* and *delusion*: in speaking of *biography* Freud suggests we direct our gaze at the subject's libidinal *privations, denials, or frustrations* in order to *construct, connect*, find the *context and interdependent relations* (all this from the meaning of the German word *Zusammenhang*) not with “delusion” alone, but with the delusion read or *interpreted* as *Wunschphantasie*, as “wish fantasy,” supplying thus the frustrations of the libido that have been traumatic for it.

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<sup>24</sup> Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 38.

<sup>25</sup> Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 57 (emphasis original).

## 2.9 General review

But are there really six clearly different methodological premises, or can we establish that Freud tries to give a series of clarifications that mark out and circumscribe the operation of a fundamental *single interpretative premise* that operates as a *reading horizon*?

After a *phenomenological reduction*, we have found that whether it is the “history” and the “details” (second premise), the “two angles,” the actual events and the delusional phrases (fourth premise), or the “biography” and the “delusion” (sixth premise), ultimately it is a case of placing the “connections” (*die Zusammenhängen*) between a “privation” (*Versagung*) and a “wish fantasy” (*Wunschphantasie*).

Having made this survey of the methodological premises in question, perhaps we can reconsider the following assertions by Freud in relation to the meaning of the delusion and the process of deciphering it, that is, his interpretation, which seeks to:

trace back innumerable details of [Schreber’s] delusions to their sources and so discover their meaning [...] But as it is, we must necessarily content ourselves with this shadowy sketch of the infantile material which was used by the paranoid disorder in portraying the current conflict. Perhaps I may be allowed to add a few words with a view to establishing the causes of this conflict that broke out in relation to the feminine wishful phantasy. As we know, when a wishful phantasy makes its appearance, our business is to bring it into connection with some *frustration*, some privation in real life.<sup>26</sup>

If we posit that *there are only two fundamental methodological premises*, the first that takes the patient’s written report and the second that involves crossing over libidinal privations with wishful fantasies, finding the interconnections between both series of elements, we find ourselves with the pristine emergence of an epistemological postulate.

All signs suggest that Freud was able to make this reading operation of desire through the mediation of a text, namely the *Memoirs*. It could be argued that from the deciphering of the desire from the text that Freud was able to form his energetic conjectures about libidinal privations. However, to clarify the notion of “text” used by Freud from the perspective of Ricœur, it will first be necessary to make a very brief introduction to Freudian epistemology. In short, the epistemological problem of Freudianism is presented by Ricœur as follows:

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<sup>26</sup> Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 57.

Les écrits de Freud se présentent d'emblée comme un discours mixte, voire ambigu, qui tantôt énonce des conflits de force justiciables d'une énergétique, tantôt des relations de sens justiciables d'une herméneutique. Je voudrais montrer que cette ambiguïté apparente est bien fondée, que ce discours mixte est la raison d'être de la psychanalyse.<sup>27</sup>

Freud's writings present themselves as a mixed or even ambiguous discourse, which at times states conflicts of force subject to an energetics, at times relations of meaning subject to a hermeneutics. I hope to show that there are good grounds for this apparent ambiguity, that this mixed discourse is the *raison d'être* of psychoanalysis.<sup>28</sup>

In psychoanalytical terms, if we apply our reflection to *the epistemic status of interpretation*, the latter can be reformulated in the following question: "How can the economic explanation be *involved* in an interpretation dealing with meanings; and conversely, how can interpretation be an *aspect* of the economic explanation?"<sup>29</sup> Is this not what psychoanalysis precisely is, an attempt to explain how motive forces can be moved through discourse?

## 2.10 "Energetics" and "hermeneutics" in the Schreber case history

Let us put to the test the theoretical consistency of Ricœur's appreciation of the "mixed discourse" on which Freud's work is epistemologically based.

The analyses made in the reading of the Schreber case would appear to lead us to firmly establish that Freud conceives and constructs all the case history based on these two levels of analysis. The first alludes to the energetic model, tied to the libidinal theory, the "energetic-economic model." The second reflects the grammatical aspect of repression, which I placed in terms of the "semantic-textual model." And as we have shown in detail, Freud worked from the text, not from a priori conjectures about the libidinal potencies that intervened in the for-

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<sup>27</sup> Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, 75. Anthony Wilden reaches identical conclusions via a radically different theoretical framework to Ricœur's: he maintains that in interpreting Freud's work it is necessary to separate the "causal bioenergetic explanations" from "his semiotic understanding communications processes" (Wilden, *Sistema y estructura*, 81). Jürgen Habermas puts it in his own terms: "psychoanalysis joins hermeneutics with operations that genuinely seemed to be reserved to the natural sciences" (Habermas, *Conocimiento e interés*, 215). An exhaustive study on Habermas and Ricœur in relation to epistemology in psychoanalysis can be found in Busacchi, *Habermas and Ricœur's Depth Hermeneutics*. See also Busacchi, "Essai sur Freud."

<sup>28</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, 76 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 66 (emphasis original).

mation of the symptoms. And is this not the methodological path along which all psychoanalysis travels as a treatment method?

In this precise sense Ricœur claims that “the analyst never handles forces directly but always indirectly in the play of meaning [...]; the link between force and meaning makes instinct the limit-concept at the frontier between the organic and psychic.”<sup>30</sup> Another way to refer to the same in this essay is in speaking about a “semantics of desire.”<sup>31</sup> Ricœur states explicitly that “the economics contributes to deciphering the text,”<sup>32</sup> which means that we always reach economic aspects—to say it in terms of Freud’s metapsychology—starting from semantic and “signifier” aspects, in Lacanian terms.

But how can one cover the distance between the *Memoirs*—the written text—and Schreber’s *world of delusion*? Can his delusion—or to be more exact, his *wish fantasy* (*Wunschphantasie*)—be understood as a form of *being-in-the-world*? Does delusion not also deploy a network of meanings and plexuses of *references* that are far from *descriptive and ostensible*?

### 3 The model of the “text” as epistemological-methodological framework of Freud’s interpretation of Schreber’s *Memoirs*

#### 3.1 *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* as “text”

I will now deal strictly with the *methodological aspects* of the interpretation of the *Memoirs*, placing in the background the aspects regarding the *content* of Freud’s interpretations. To fulfil this goal, I will return to the methodological premises arising from the reading of Freud’s case history to now *reinterpret them from the category of “text” taken from Ricœur’s textual hermeneutics*.

What, then, is the *reference* of *Memoirs* as a “text”? It is precisely “the task of *reading qua interpretation: to actualize the reference*”<sup>33</sup> that allows us to answer this question. To this I might add: the task of reading as interpretation, i.e., as actualizing the reference, means defining in turn the “text” as any discourse fixed by writing: “Let us say that a text is any discourse or set of utterances

30 Ricœur, *De l’interprétation*, 153 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 151 (my translation).

31 Ricœur, *De l’interprétation*, 355 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 363.

32 Ricœur, *De l’interprétation*, 175 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 174.

33 Ricœur, “¿Qué es un texto?,” 130 (emphasis added), and Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 109.

fixed by writing. According to this definition, fixation by writing is constitutive of the text itself,<sup>34</sup> writes Ricœur. That is, fixation by writing—becoming “text”—substitutes speech, appearing and intercepting its place. As in *Time and Narrative I*, Ricœur thinks of the functions of reading as an operation inseparable from the notion of *text*. “This idea of a direct relation between the meaning of the statement and writing can be supported by reflecting on the function of reading in relation to writing,”<sup>35</sup> he adds later. Thus, we can affirm then that *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* is a “text,” and we shall now see how this concept sheds light on Freud's *reading operation* or *interpretation process*.

### 3.2 From “free association” to the first “reading operation”

I shall begin with the first methodological premise proposed by Freud in the case study, as it is precisely this that functions as a transition, as a point of passage between spoken discourse and written discourse, but which suffered—as I said—from a concept of the “text” which Freud never accurately defined<sup>36</sup> because it seems to fuse with ‘culture’ per se. The premise established that it is legitimate to take a written report or printed case history as a substitute for personal acquaintance, on the basis that it is not possible to force the internal resistances of paranoiacs. This first methodological affirmation is fundamental, as it seeks to justify the substitution of a personal meeting with Schreber with the analysis and interpretation of a written text.

If we substitute personal acquaintance with the interpretation of the written report, the “text” is what substitutes here the psychoanalytical face-to-face method, the “free association.” Furthermore, Freud's methodological postulate is based on the axiom that paranoiacs cannot overcome their internal resistances, an idea increasingly questioned by subsequent psychoanalytical developments in the treatment of psychosis.

The notion of the “text” makes it possible to substantiate this aspect of methodology without resorting to *the assumption of the impossibility of overcoming paranoiac internal resistances*, a postulate which has unfortunately limited and biased the clinical care of psychotic subjects in general.

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34 Ricœur, “¿Qué es un texto?” 127 / *From Text to Action*, 106. Johan Michel points out some objections and limits to assimilating the products of the unconscious to the “model of the text”; see Michel, “Being and method,” 171.

35 Ricœur, “¿Qué es un texto?” 127 / *From Text to Action*, 107. See also Ricœur, *Time and Narrative I*, 80.

36 Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, 35 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 26.

As I have shown in analyzing the case history, Freud does not hesitate to sustain that we also find unconscious defense mechanisms in psychoses and that, as occurs in *dream formations*, *delusional formations* are also forms of *wish fulfillment*. But the structural homologies between *dream formations* and *delusional formations* do not end there but are also extended to the *modes of disfigurements*—the analogy with dream “figurability”—of the material.

We have seen that in Freud’s case history such mechanisms are presented primarily as mechanisms of *textual distortion* (*Entstellung*). But Freud’s process of interpretation does not clarify distortion from certain “prejudices” or prior postulates but comes to dismantle such procedures secondarily. What is immediately evident, where Freud takes support to then introduce his interpretations, is what is formulated by the *third methodological premise*, which precisely deals with *insistence* and *repetition* in the text. We could argue that *compiling the repetitions* is the *first reading operation* that Freud carries out.

Lastly, there would appear to be a kind of implied transfer from the idea of the *text of the dream* to the examination of the *text of the delusion*, but it is necessary to complement this transfer or *methodological analogy* by inserting it in the universe of the “text” understood in the Ricœurian sense, since the “text” that Freud refers to in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is a *spoken text*, a text not limited as such but rather used as a conceptual and methodological analogy close to *writing*, especially in *hieroglyphic writing*, or a *writing* not entirely conceptualized, but generally used to *decipher* the unconscious in any of its manifestations.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3 The “sentence” as first unit of analysis in the context of the “text”

We return here to the *fourth methodological premise*, as this clearly establishes the first *unit of analysis* explained by Freud, namely that which distinguished *two angles* to approach Schreber’s text: the *first* aimed to directly interpret the “delusional phrases” as they appear in the text and the *second* aimed to study real events, which could be located in objective material reality, and which operated as triggers of crises.

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37 For a detailed study of the Freudian analogy between “writing” and “psychic inscription,” see Derrida’s essay “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” in Derrida, *La escritura y la diferencia / Writing and Difference*, 196–231.

This strategy is what led Freud to locate “the familiar complexes and motive forces of mental life,” conceived as universal, such as the Father Complex. Here we find two concepts of “reality” operating simultaneously—*Wirklichkeit* and *Realität*—as found in “Formulations on the Two Principles of Psychic Functioning.”

We discovered here that the *unit of analysis* used by Freud is not merely the “word” as independent and self-sufficient element. The unit of analysis is rather the “sentence,” the *delusional sentence* (*wahnhaften Satz*). But Freud also proposes that we take into consideration delusional sentences *referring to* and *in relation to* the *biography*, the information of Schreber's real, material and objective life, to thus construct the *contexts that triggered* the crises.

As well as reading the *Memoirs* themselves, Freud studied the fragments of the case history and Dr. Weber's forensic expertise available on the Schreber case. One can thus conjecture—in the absence of sources to prove it—that Freud may have cut and highlighted certain sentences from these, especially those that gave a certain order of intelligibility to the phenomena studied, such as when he draws our attention to Schreber's relationship with Flechsig and postulates that this is a “process of transference,” an element that he then uses to argue that persecution delusion is a defence against the advance of the homosexual libido. And it is also a “sentence” that Freud arrives at to establish a semantic-grammatical formula of repression: “*I (a man) love him (a man.)*”

The proposed methodology—*textual hermeneutics*—is thus entirely coherent with the type of *unit of analysis* established by Freud himself, which prevents us from having to graft an alien epistemology onto psychoanalysis; I refer specifically to the distinction Ricœur makes between the two levels of language, *semiotics* and *semantics*. This semantic level situated the *phrase* or *sentence* as minimal meaningful unit, that is, capable of producing *meaning*.

It can then be argued that this is a *semantic* rather than *semiotic* unit of analysis, reading this term as a deciphering of signs in a universe of “signs,” within a system closed over itself, closed to the outside world. In fact, we see the exact reverse interpretative principle, as Freud directs his attention to the *nexuses*, at the “network of connections” (*Zusammenhängen*), to the inter-relations between *delusion* and *biographical events*, this being a fundamental interpretative horizon in the case history. In turn, this analysis perspective reveals the two modes of reality that Freud postulates in terms of *Wirklichkeit* and *Realität*, the external world and the inner world.

But to get thus far, Freud first had to have *selected* the decisive sentences and words. As Ricœur states, there is no *hermeneutic moment* without passing through the *structuralist moment*. By *structuralist moment* we refer to the selection of words and sentences that are repeated insistently in the text, and I affirm

that such a stage or moment of the *interpretative process* is wholly and strictly *structural*. But also, it is our intention to show that it is only the *first part* of the process, which would be meaningless if it were not then articulated within the *hermeneutic moment*, in which we pass from the logic of the *sign* to the logic of the *sentence* or *discourse*, in this case, written discourse; it is then the *fixation by writing* that makes the text what it is, and it is the text that produces the author.

Furthermore, it is this same *fixation by writing* that gives the text *semantic autonomy*, that is, it provides *stability of meanings* necessary for Freud to then support or shore up on it the conceptual pillars of the psychoanalytical doctrine of psychoses.

In the *structuralist moment* of the interpretative process, it is not a question of the *content*, of the *semantics*, of the metaphorical or literal *meaning* of sentences, but rather a question of locating and isolating the elements that are most repeated, especially words and sentences, without considering the content and its meaning, but taking the formal aspects of written discourse. When Freud isolates a series of key words in Schreber's delusion—"soul-murder," "bless," "nerves," and "voluptuousness"—the criterion used in selecting them is not an attempt to force a theoretical speculation to fit by necessity in the sphere of a clinical phenomenon, nor is it a question of introducing a preestablished concept—such as the *Father Complex*—which was waiting to be inserted into a place preestablished beforehand.

It is a question of the *insistence* and textual *repetition* in *Memoirs*, understood as a whole, as a work, as a structured discourse, fixed by writing, that keeps its meaning stable; and the same occurs with those phrases that stand out the most: "God's rays," "transformation into a woman," "examined souls," and "fundamental language," with "transformation into a woman" as the backbone that Freud finds throughout the whole unfolding of Schreber's psychosis. To Ricœur, writing occurs in the same place as the spoken word, occupying its place. But also, with written discourse the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide.

This disassociation of the verbal meaning of the text and the author's intentions gave the concept of *inscription* its decisive meaning, Ricœur argued. This made "inscription" synonymous with the *semantic autonomy* of the text. It no longer matters what the author meant or intended to say, but what the text means. But Ricœur also notes that this "de-psychologizing of interpretation does not imply that the notion of authorial meaning has lost all significance."<sup>38</sup>

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38 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 43 / *Interpretation Theory*, 30.



I consider that Freud's "reading operation" of *Memoirs* fits this procedure, as Freud did not attempt to restore a supposed intentionality behind the text or make a description of Schreber's "psychology," but rather through the process of interpretation, he was able to draw from the *Memoirs* the essence of the unconscious modes of defense of the paranoiac subjectivity, analyzing the text, unfolding its *world*, locating the predominant meanings.

### 3.4 The "text" as "work" as unit of analysis

But we then see that the level of analysis is once again extended and broadened, and its frontiers expanded to attain the plane of "text" understood as "work," that is, as written, developed discourse.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Freud sustains that Schreber "presses the key into our hand" for the interpretation, by adding to a delusional phrase "a gloss, a quotation or an example," "denying some parallel to it that has arisen in his own mind."

Freud makes here an uncommon connection between *negation* and Aristotelian *similitude theory*. To Freud, *negating a similitude* is another way of corroborating an interpretation, and here we see in this case that the application of negation in spoken discourse coincides with negation in the written text. Freud makes this perspective his own and uses it both to interpret the spoken account of a dream and, dismantling in each case the "negation" that precedes it, interpreting the *similarities* that occur to Schreber himself.

We can see then that on some occasions Freud combines, in an uncommon and remarkable way, his reading of the *negation* as a form of defense and Aristotle's *appreciation of similarities*, especially as regards those occasions when it is enough to remove the "express impugnations" that arise in Schreber at certain "associative similarities." This is then another valid resource in deciphering a text.

### 3.5 The use of "quotations" and "intertextuality" as foundation of interpretation: "Illustration by underpinning"

In exploring this criterion, we are now fully in the *hermeneutic moment* of the *interpretation process*, where meanings in play in the text are explored. Prado

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<sup>39</sup> Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 46 / *Interpretation Theory*, 33.

de Oliveira has impeccably highlighted Schreber's use of "quotations" in his writing and Freud's use of them in interpreting. But in this specific case of interpretation of *Memoirs*, the "quotation" corresponds to the dimension of *intertextuality*.

Freud saw the quotation as no more than a way for Schreber to provide us with some "key" to the interpretation. Recall Prado Oliveira's position that Schreber's book is a product of extensive reading, and all the authors that Schreber quotes are, according to him, part of "a current in which Bachofen, also a magistrate, is its greatest expression. Bachofen proclaims the reconstruction, aside from the ancient civilizations, a kingdom of woman, of a sensual and disorderly matriarchy."<sup>40</sup> That is, Prado de Oliveira goes so far as to situate *Memoirs* as a work that forms part of a literary movement.

Prado de Oliveira considers *Memoirs* according to the Ricoeurian concept of "work," that is, reading it as a creation, as a labor of language, as an invention, with all that implies in terms of semantic innovation and sublimation. And like Ricoeur, Freud appears to conceive of *language* itself as *metaphorical*, in the sense of Aristotelian *hermeneia*.

Regarding Schreber, Freud adds: "his allusion to an offence covered by the surrogate idea 'soul-murder' could not be more transparent [...] The voices said, as though giving grounds for the threat of castration: 'For you are to be represented as being given over to voluptuous excesses.'"<sup>41</sup> So Freud even interprets "soul-murder" according to this concept of language, and this leads him to claim that it is a "substitutive formation," that is, in Freudian terms, a *symptom*.

Prado de Oliveira also maintains that "his quotations make up a privileged field for intertextual investigations, given that intertextuality is the prime condition of any interpretative approach."<sup>42</sup> Thus *Memoirs* can be understood "from the works to which it refers, manifestly or latently."<sup>43</sup>

This kind of Schreberian "code" made up of works of art and elements taken from religion shows us the *textual dimension*—the *Schriftlichkeit*—which Ricoeur clarifies very well in developing his theory of *threefold mimesis*.

*Two types of quotations* can be distinguished in Schreber's text: *direct* quotations, where he indicates the work and author, and *indirect* quotations, which are presented in two ways: either Schreber "hears them thanks to 'voices,' 'visionary' or 'clocks of the world,' for example, and it is possible to connect what he heard with an author he frequently cites, or with a work cited else-

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<sup>40</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 47.

<sup>41</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 52–53.

<sup>42</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 31.

where.” Or otherwise, as Prado de Oliveira claims, Schreber only quotes the author's work, but the possibility remains of establishing between one and the other a clear link with the issues dealt with in *Memoirs*. But “these two types of quotations do not play the same role, although they both allow an intertextual approach in which Schreber appears as one author among others [...] The quotation appears, then, as a form of translation,” Oliveira claims.<sup>44</sup>

Note that Prado de Oliveira sees the quotations as making this “translation” between the paranoiac figurative mode—that is, the “delusional formations”—and the “modes of ‘normal expression.’” Indeed, recall that Freud maintains that Schreber illustrates the nature of “soul-murder,” to take just one example, “by referring to the legends embodied in Goethe's *Faust*, Byron's *Manfred*, Weber's *Freischütz*.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, I maintain that Freud calls the interpretation that is based on a quotation “illustration by underpinning,” this being one of the methods of textual interpretation of *Memoirs*.

Having established this *textual mediation*, what Freud refers to in indicating the “translation” (*Übersetzung*) he seeks takes on another meaning, which implies retracing—*analyzing*—the *distortion* of the “paranoiac mode of expression,” to thus show the “familiar complexes and motive forces” that Freud also discovers in other neuroses, but which in this case occurs entirely in the textual dimension and in the modality of psychosis.

Prado de Oliveira even suggests that “the relation between the source text and the quotations obeys operations analogous to those that connect the latent thinking of the dream and manifest content; the quotation appears, then, as a particular form of association, capable of fulfilling a desire that is clearly expressed in the source text.”<sup>46</sup> But despite such observations, Prado de Oliveira never defines what he understands by “text.”

### 3.6 The epistemological-methodological dimension of the analogy between “psychosis” and “dream”

The *fifth methodological premise* referred precisely to this: “it is legitimate to judge paranoia on the model of the dream.” Freud saw the nucleus of Schreber's “delusional formation” in “Schreber's relations to his first physician,” namely, Professor Flechsig, and we maintained that it is important to note the fact that

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<sup>44</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 66.

<sup>45</sup> Freud, “Psycho-Analytic Notes,” 44.

<sup>46</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 162.

the very notion of “delusional formation work” (*Wahnbildungsarbeit*) was a direct allusion to this dream model to render delusion intelligible, i. e., to interpret it. But Freud could never clarify this leap from the *methodological perspective*, although he did so from a conceptual perspective, especially in affirming the fact of *wish fulfilment* also in Schreber’s delusional formations. This would be the first analogy between “dream formation work” (*Traumarbeit*) and “delusion formation work” (*Wahnbildungsarbeit*.)

We will return here to the ideas proposed around the German word that Freud uses to conceive the mechanisms of the construction of delusions, namely *Wahnbildungsarbeit*, the “work of delusional formation.” This notion is close, conceptually speaking, to that of *Traumarbeit*, “dream work,” not merely because of a semantic coincidence, but because of a close conceptual connection. What can be taken from the analysis of the *Wahnbildungsarbeit* clearly shows that for Freud there was a subjective work developing the delusion, and this was shown in Schreber’s tenacious desire to write his *Memoirs*, the significant memories of his illness. In this case they also coincide with the formation work of the delusion and the writing of the text, as language that requires a work. This is another of the points of contact between Ricœur’s notion of “text” and Freud’s appreciation of *Memoirs*.

### 3.7 The “world” of *Memoirs* from Freud’s case history

So, what is the “world” of Schreber’s *Memoirs*? Following Ricœur, we see that one of the central characteristics of the text is that “it is addressed to an unknown reader and potentially all those who can read,” and therefore “it is part of the meaning of the text to be open to an indefinite number of readers, and therefore, interpretation.” This “open” character of the text is what enables multiple readings, and this aspect is also “the dialectic counterpart of the text’s semantic autonomy.” Is this feature what makes *hermeneutics begin where dialogue ends*?

I will explore this point with reference to the examination of the *sixth methodological premise*, which suggested that Schreber’s biography overlapped with his delusion: “As we know, when a wishful phantasy makes its appearance, our business is to bring it into connection with some *frustration*, some privation in real life,” Freud wrote.

But in referring to the “biography,” Freud invited us to direct our attention to the subject’s libidinal “privations,” “negations” or “frustrations” to thus establish the *relations* (*Zusammenhang*) not with the “delusion” by itself, but with the “delusion” interpreted as *Wunschphantasie*, as “wish fantasy.”

What Freud finds with his interpretations are the *connections* between the privations (*Versagungen*) and the wish fantasies (*Wunschphantasien*), but now we must try to explain how he manages to do this. The central question is: how does Freud interpret the delusion text to be able to reach the affirmation that “being God’s wife” is the realization of the feminine procreation fantasy? Or, in other words, how does Freud manage to construct his energetic hypotheses—referring to libidinal privation—from the interpretation of the text?

We can deduce two different levels from the analysis of the case history: one, referring to the *semantic-grammatical aspect* of repression, where the analysis revolves around the different ways of negating the phrase “I (a man) love him (a man)”; but we also find the *energetic-libidinal aspect*, where Freud’s analysis focuses on the ways in which the libido can stagnate and return to the points of fixation.

From the methodological perspective, Freud makes his conjectures while adhering to the text, but he does his “reading operation” beginning from the suspension of references of descriptive discourse, as Ricœur suggests in relation to the “poetic work,” to what we can now plainly call “work,” as it would be impossible to have analyzed Schreber’s *delusion-text* by approaching it as a descriptive discourse whose reference was objective material reality. Not because the delusion does not contain even whole fragments of objective material reality (*Wirklichkeit*), but because *the process of Freud’s interpretation culminates in the elaboration of a series of non-descriptive references*: this is the case of the *Versagung*, the privation and negation of libidinal satisfaction and, ultimately, of the movements, fixations and stagnations of the libido per se.

Perhaps we can say that the libido operates here in the way that Ricœur calls a “metaphorical reference,” which brings with it a dimension of the truth that is also, let us recall, in the strict sense that Ricœur gives these terms.

Only with the condition of suspending immediate and descriptive references does Freud manage to unfold the “world of the text,” the world of Schreber’s memoirs, the Freudian world of the memoirs. As Jakobson says, it is a ‘splitting of the reference,’ or in Ricœur’s terms, the unfolding of a more fundamental mode of reference, which in this case explores Schreber’s subjective truths, but at the same time attains the nucleus of the paranoid experience; so much so that the “Schreber case” remains today a paradigmatic case of psychosis.

This was then the “negative condition,” the parenthesizing of the material objective reality that in this case makes it possible to access the wish fantasies (*Wunschphantasien*.) And Freud shows, furthermore, that psychotic subjectivity—like neurotic subjectivity—is based on at least two distinct types of realities,

and that the specifically psychoanalytical reading aims to establish and connect the broken ties between *libido privation* and *wish fantasy*.

Therefore, we can speak of Schreber's world of delusion, following Freud's references to the letter. And here, once again, Freud's interpretation of *Memoirs* and Ricœur's textual hermeneutics converge. Freud sustains that the paranoid reconstructs the world thanks to delusional formations, and that this allows him to return to live in a habitable world: "The delusional formation, which we take to be the pathological product, is in reality an attempt at recovery, a process of reconstruction."<sup>47</sup> It is a matter then of a world newly built through the "work of delusion."<sup>48</sup>

Ricœur proposes that it is a question of "unfolding the text, not towards its author, but towards its immanent meaning."<sup>49</sup> I argue that Schreber's "world of the text," his "world of the delusion" *remakes the world*, makes a *re-description of the world*, producing a *semantic innovation*. Once again, Freud does not concern himself with "what Schreber meant," but the *logic* of his psychosis, deciphered thanks to this unique, novel reading operation.

*Interpreting delusion is, in this case, the same as unfolding the system of references and meanings that the delusion unfolds in its immanence.* But this cannot be only a first movement or approach, as Freud goes much further in attaining, through textual mediation, Schreber's *being-in-the-world*, especially in locating the semantic network that underlies and interweaves the logic of his psychosis.

## 4 Interpretation as "reading process"

### 4.1 The threefold mimesis process

Ricœur argues that interpretation is a kind of *reading process*.<sup>50</sup> I shall try to shed light on this idea here, as it takes in all the previous analyses, including them in an organic totality, which is the reading process per se.

There are different ways to posit that Freud interpreted *Memoirs* following the logic of a "reading process." One derives from the "threefold mimesis" theory; the other feeds from the "hermeneutic arc" notion but conceived from the di-

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<sup>47</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Prado de Oliveira, *Freud y Schreber*, 65.

<sup>49</sup> Ricœur, "La tarea de la hermenéutica," 63 (my translation).

<sup>50</sup> Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 86, 106 (emphasis added) / *Interpretation Theory*, 74, 94–95.

alectics between *explanation* and *understanding*. From the threefold mimesis perspective, we can locate these three moments in Freud's *reading process* of *Memoirs*. I shall use the threefold mimesis perspective here, interpreting mimesis<sub>1</sub> as "prefiguration," mimesis<sub>2</sub> as "configuration," and mimesis<sub>3</sub> as "refiguration."

Recall that the center of gravity of this triad is mimesis<sub>2</sub>, that is, *emplotment* (*mis-en-intrigue*). In my investigation, we refer to the *emplotment of Freud's case history*, which is the object of our study, and not the *Memoirs* itself. The "prefiguration" and "refiguration" are the before and after of the "configuration" of the plot. To distinguish each one separately: "Prefiguration" (mimesis<sub>1</sub>) refers to a series of patterns or networks that are generally shared—in this case by Schreber and Freud—related to having shared the same culture: living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, having a deep knowledge of Romantic literature (Goethe, Schiller, Byron, etc.). Prado de Oliveira's study explores this state of interpretation, mimesis<sub>1</sub>. It is here that structural, symbolic, and temporal features become present as does, ultimately, a shared cultural horizon. These elements form part of the "prefiguration." We can also mention here the Kraepelinian psychiatric categories with which Freud argues, or psychiatric semiology in general, given that Freud also refers to 'voices' or 'delusions,' to then interpret them from their perspective as wish fantasies.

"Configuration" (mimesis<sub>2</sub>) is the moment of emplotment itself, where the "facts" are set out and ordered in a certain way. In this moment there is a synthesis of the heterogeneous, where Freud selects the most relevant words and phrases to make his interpretations, showing first the "Case History," then "Attempts at Interpretation," then finally clarifying everything in "On the Mechanism of Paranoia."

Ricœur states that mimesis<sub>2</sub> "draws its intelligibility from its faculty of mediation, which is to conduct us from the one side of the text to the other [*l'amont à l'aval du texte*], transfiguring the one side [*l'amont*] into the other [*en aval*] through its power of configuration."<sup>51</sup> In other words, Freud's case history stands as a mediation between the psychotic experience retold in *Memoirs* and the subsequent original understanding of the subjective logic of paranoia.

"Refiguration" (mimesis<sub>3</sub>) alludes to the point of intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader, as the act of reading that puts into play the reference and accompanies the emplotment by updating the text's capacity to be read. Ricœur stated that: "These features contribute particularly to breaking down the prejudice that opposes an 'inside' and an 'outside' of

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51 Ricœur, *Temps et récit 1*, 86 / *Time and Narrative 1*, 53.

a text [...] The notion of a structuring activity, visible in the operation of emplotment, transcends this opposition.”<sup>52</sup>

It is also at this moment of mimesis, that we can locate the particular way in which the subjectivities of the author and of the reader—Schreber and Freud—meet. In this point we will have followed Ricœur in referring to Gadamer’s concept of the “fusion of horizons.”

We also understand “refiguration” as the world of the *Memoirs* opened up by Freud’s reading of them, including the thoughts on the semantic-grammatical and energetic-libidinal dimensions of repression. Freud opened up the subjective world of paranoia like no other author had done before.

## 4.2 The “hermeneutic arc” or “circle”

The other perspective that allows us to understand interpretation as a reading process is the concept of the *hermeneutic circle* or *arc*. This concept implies a dialogical circularity between the *part* and the *whole*, which runs “between texts and contexts, works and biography, interpreters and traditions, author and reader.”<sup>53</sup>

Although the threefold mimesis theory can also be approached from a notion of hermeneutic circle or arc, we approach it now from Ricœur’s original reading of “explanation” (*Erklären*) and “understanding” (*Verstehen*), taken from Dilthey. For Ricœur, the hermeneutic circle must be re-formulated. It “no longer proceeds from an intersubjective relation linking the subjectivity of the author and that of the reader. The hermeneutical program is a connection between two discourses, the discourse of the text and the discourse of interpretation,”<sup>54</sup> but is related to Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” and with the fact that “what has to be interpreted in a text is what it says and what it speaks about—the kind of world it opens up, discloses.”<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, with the “hermeneutic arc” concept Ricœur encompasses in one process of interpretative reading the *structuralist moment*—linked to the “explanation” (*Erklären*)—and the *hermeneutic moment* posterior to this—linked more to understanding (*Verstehen*). That is, this concept is a question of grasping the dynamics of interpretative reading, approached from the notion of herme-

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52 Ricœur, *Temps et récit 1*, 116 / *Time and Narrative 1*, 76.

53 Calvo Martínez and Ávila Crespo, *Paul Ricœur*, 370.

54 Ricœur, “Del existencialismo a la filosofía del lenguaje,” 14.

55 Ricœur, “Del existencialismo a la filosofía del lenguaje,” 14.



neutic arc or circle as *epistemological model*. To explain means here to extract the structure, that is, the internal relations of dependence that constitute the static meaning of the text; to “interpret” (to “understand”) is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to “place oneself en-route toward the *orient* of the text,”<sup>56</sup> in Ricœur's words.

Of course, in concrete practice it is not so straightforward to separate these interpretative operations so emphatically; Ricœur never had such an intention, but rather to clarify the processes of interpretation of texts using this *dialectic model*. That is, understanding and explanation “tend to overlap and to pass over into each other,”<sup>57</sup> but Ricœur's conjecture is that “in explanation [...] we unfold the range of propositions and meanings, whereas in understanding we comprehend or grasp as a whole the chain of partial meanings in one act of synthesis.”<sup>58</sup>

We can locate with some precision these two moments in Freud's analysis of the *Memoirs*. The first structural and “explicative” moment is that in which Freud separates the words and phrases that are repeated and insisted on in the text; here Freud effectively exposes propositions and meanings as his “Attempts at Interpretation.” Then, in a second moment, Freud approaches the whole—the *Memoirs* as a work—to clarify in an act of synthesis that the central meaning of the delusion—the “transformation into a woman”—is a wish fantasy, where phase 2 of the delusion shows and makes patent—after being interpreted—the procreation wish. This is the horizon of meaning attained by “understanding” thus defined.

## 5 Conclusion

I have presented Ricœur's *textual hermeneutics* as a *moment* within Freud's *process of interpretation* of *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. This procedure is demonstrated by the fact that Freud does not simply perform a purely “intra-textual,” structural analysis of the *Memoirs*, but also uses “inter-textuality” in comparing the *Memoirs* with case histories and experts' reports available in his day, and with other texts from the literature of Goethe, Byron, Schiller, etc., carrying out also a hermeneutical-textual analysis.

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56 Ricœur, “¿Qué es un texto?” 144 / *From Text to Action*, 122.

57 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 84 / *Interpretation Theory*, 72.

58 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 84 / *Interpretation Theory*, 72.

Though there are no rules for making valid conjectures, “there are methods for validating those conjectures we do make.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, “the text as a whole and as a singular whole may be compared to an object, which may be viewed from several sides, but never from all sides at once.”<sup>60</sup> And as Freud’s analysis shows, “it is always possible to relate the same sentence in different ways to this or that other sentence considered as the cornerstone of the text,”<sup>61</sup> in this case the “transformation into a woman.” “A specific kind of one-sidedness is implied in the act of reading. This one-sidedness grounds the guess character of interpretation.”<sup>62</sup>

If we retrace the process of interpretation of the *Memoirs*, we can establish that Freud started out from the written text and came secondly to the development of his energetic and economic postulates in the analysis of the delusion, as well as its unconscious meanings. This allows us to claim that Schreber’s case history is constructed on the examination of this *semantics of desire*, which is ‘textual’ in this case.

Among other meanings, “interpreting” in Schreber’s case history means tracing back the details of the delusion to its sources, the female wish fantasy in this case, *retracing* with some degree of certainty the nucleus of the delusional structure (*Kern der Wahnbildung*) to its origin. This case history clearly shows that the “investigatory procedure has, in effect, a strong affinity with the disciplines of textual interpretation.”<sup>63</sup>

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59 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 88 / *Interpretation Theory*, 76 (translation modified).

60 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 89 / *Interpretation Theory*, 77.

61 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 89 / *Interpretation Theory*, 77–78.

62 Ricœur, *Teoría de la interpretación*, 89 / *Interpretation Theory*, 78.

63 Ricœur, “La cuestión de la prueba en psicoanálisis,” 29.

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