Migratory Psychoanalysis

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In September 2004 I participated in a conference in La Plata, Argentina, on the topic of "The State and the Politics of Memory: Archives, Museums, and Education."[1] The conference was convened by the Comisión Provincial por la Memoria, an authority commissioned in 2000 by the provincial government of Buenos Aires (whose capital is La Plata) with the task of developing a public and comparative discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung*, or coming to terms with the past. The Argentine past in question is the military regime that held power between 1976 and 1983, unleashing a campaign of state terrorism responsible for the murder of 30,000 citizens, with a severe overrepresentation, in increasing order, of youth, secondary school and university students, and Jews. The city of La Plata boasts an important university; as a result, the violence there was especially severe. The Comisión por la Memoria is housed in a former police headquarters known to the citizens of La Plata as a site of torture and other horrors. Its task includes the preservation and dissemination of the archive of the state security forces (DIPBA), containing 3,800,000 files as well as other materials, including, for example, 160 recordings of bugged telephone conversations.[2] To my surprise and, I must confess, to my relief, the large public audience proved quite interested in the topic of my own contribution: discourses and sites of public memory and history in Berlin. As it turns out, a delegation from the Comisión por la Memoria was about to travel to Berlin to consult with analogous scholars and archivists there, specifically with the archivists of the Stasi files.

I gave my paper to an audience much more "public" than professionally academic, an audience whose first rows were largely filled by officers and members of the two organizations known as *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*. Well known but still in need of an adequate anthropology, the Mothers, *las Madres,* emerged in enormous danger and courage during the years of dictatorship, generating

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an activist discourse that combined symbolic and pragmatic performances with rare efficacy. The mothers of "disappeared" sons and daughters (*desaparecidos*) gained secular legitimacy at least in part through their evocation of a Marian aura, their reenactment of the position of the *Pietà*. Their aura did not assure immunity from state terrorism, and indeed several of the early leaders were themselves murdered. A parallel, though much smaller group called *Padres de la Plaza de Mayo* never achieved the same presence or results. In recent years, the children of the "disappeared" – *Los Hijos* – have formed their own organization, in the demand for the factual and legal recognition of the murders of their parents. Many of these children were born in the places of their parents' torture and murder; many of them were in fact brought up in the homes of their parents' murderers. The fall-out of these legacies is immense. Twenty years after the end of the dictatorship in Argentina, the Mothers are now politically divided over the choice of devoting their energies solely to the work of history or, alternatively, becoming involved in contemporary political controversies.

At the conference in La Plata, the majority of the Mothers in attendance ritualized their physical presences in the form of the now legendary white kerchief holding the embroidered names of their murdered children, often more than one name, often accompanied by photographs worn on campaign-style buttons on the lapel. Personal mourning, political activism, and collective memory form a united enterprise here. The theoretical dimension of the paper I gave argued for the persistent dialectic of memory and history, specifically for the sharpening of discourses of memory according to the rules of history. I was arguing against the appropriation of history by memory in the tradition of Pierre Nora, and for the infusion of memory qua raw material by historical reasoning in what I take to be the central Freudian argument. In the question period, many of the audience members who identified themselves explicitly as mourners addressed this part of my argument but – again, to my relief – they were not offended by or opposed to it.

As Mariano Ben Plotkin has recently argued, public and private culture in Argentina are uniquely suffused with the language and practice of psychoanalysis.[3] Is the success story of psychoanalysis in Argentina an example of the interface of "Freud and the non-European" – to invoke a late essay of Edward Said's. In a typical instance of the fundamental ambivalence that defines and interrogates post-colonial spheres, the "Argentine" and the "European" are impossible to separate.

Present at the conference in La Plata was Laura Conte, an officer of the Comisión por la Memoria, a psychoanalyst, a survivor and a victim of the dictatorship and a founder of *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*. She accompanied Elena Leonhardtson, a psychoanalyst whose history includes arrest and torture

by the regime, long periods under house arrest, periods which were punctuated by occasional emergence from her home to offer emergency therapy to family members of "disappeared" victims and other persecuted citizens. These therapy sessions were conducted during short car rides around the city of Buenos Aires. I left this extraordinary session with the rough hypothesis that Argentine psychoanalytic culture has forged a much more sophisticated dialectic of history and memory than the ones that have developed, to my knowledge, in Europe and the U.S. in the twenty years since the publication of Pierre Nora's *Lieux de memoire* in 1984.

Psychoanalytic exchange proceeds in a privacy that may be able to protect itself. In this context, I was especially moved by a comment from the audience about the fragility of Argentina's new public and state-sanctioned discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung*. We are afraid, this questioner stated, that this new openness will be taken away, as it has so often been in the past. The best reply to this concern seemed to be the advocacy of a leveraging of open discourse via international cooperation and exchange. Indeed, at the conclusion of the conference an agreement was signed between the Comisión por la memoria and the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (BDIC) in Nanterre. The intention is to duplicate every file, every record now in the possession of the archive in La Plata, and thus to safeguard it in what one of the participants sadly called « a reliable country. » Thus the fragility of knowledge and information are always to be understood as contingent on the vagaries of power.

Psychoanalysis was born in Vienna (though Sigmund Freud was not). It is a central European discourse of the fin-de-siècle, and a decidedly urban one. Its varied historians have long accepted a certain impasse on the issue of its historical contextualization. For intradisciplinary historians of science like Frank Sulloway, Freud is and remains a "biologist of the mind," an applied scientist whose mental and evolutionary models remain loyal to the biological maps of his early training and work. Neither time nor place, neither history nor culture nor politics, is relevant. The cultural historians are among themselves also at impasse; though their disciplinary interfaces may be more intimate, their disagreements are no less profound. Thus for Peter Gay, Freud is the European inheritor of the Enlightenment, of its power of reason and drive toward secularization and freedom. Freud's Enlightenment may have a national focus and speak to a national tradition; if so then tradition is German and emanates from Lessing's Hamburg, Mendelssohn and Hegel's Berlin, Kant's Koenigsberg. Vienna remains an accident. But for Carl Schorske, Freud's most pathbreaking and most precise contextualizer, Freud and psychoanalysis are both unthinkable without fin-de-siècle Vienna.

For Schorske, Freud is the analytical semblable and frere to the modernist artists and planners of the 1890s (the decade of *The Interpretation of Dreams*), in other words of those modernists who generationally and intellectually followed the disappointed single generation of Austrian liberals. Their fathers had witnessed the rise of Austrian parliamentarianism and Jewish emancipation; now the sons endured a fulminating new anti-Semitism, a disillusionment with liberal politics, and a loss of faith in political action and possibility altogether. In his essay "Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams,*" Schorske reminds us of the line from Virgil's *Aeneid* which Freud placed on the book's frontispiece:

> Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.
> If I cannot bend the surfaces, I shall move the depths.

For Schorske, the fin-de-siècle disavowal of the surfaces for the depths (including what would come to be called depth psychology) involved a turning inward away from the public world. Schorske's argument and rhetoric did not argue that such a move might have been a displacement of political will rather than a sublimation or disavowal. Nonetheless, such a revision might be considered a friendly amendment to his argument, in the aftermath of slightly different paradigms that convincingly expanded the boundaries and definitions of the political. Among these, femininism's "the personal is the political" is perhaps the most forceful. In any case, no matter how psychoanalysis's origins are contextualized, it is no accident that as a mode of cultural analysis it was discovered, along with the modernist paradigm of fin-de-siècle Vienna itself, in the United States of the 1960s. Vienna and late Habsburg Austria's combination of an embarrassment of cultural riches combined with a teetering multicultural and multilinguistic empire was too good a mirror of the United States in the 1960s to pass up.

The papers collected here all point to the overdetermined character of psychoanalytic discourse, in particular to the multicultural overdetermination.

When psychoanalysis was exiled from Vienna and from Berlin, internal conflicts followed the culturally divergent routes of exile. The history of psychoanalysis does not usually interpret these conflicts as having early phases in continental Europe, to say nothing of the cultural and ideological difference within the varied cultures of central Europe, the cultures of Catholic Vienna and Protestant Berlin. Thus, the important split between the Viennese Anna Freud and the Berliner Melanie Klein is one most often understood to place within child psychology, within the second generation of psychoanalysis and the first generation of British psychoanalysis. But it is also a split between Vienna and

Berlin, in no way diluted by its geographic displacement, indeed between a Hobbesian view of the nature of childhood and a more benevolent one that might be associated with Catholic imagery in general and sacred mother/child imagery more specifically. Moreover, these cultural paradigms and ideologies were profoundly internalized by Jewish thinkers, so that forms of Jewish Protestant and Jewish Catholic thinking develop, which must be taken very seriously as cultural and intellectual formations and which are only extremely inadequately grasped according to the jargon and assumptions of assimilation.

When psychoanalysis continues its westward migration, whether to North or to South America, we do not have the right to assume that its European baggage gets lost en route. Rather, like a paradigmatic, photogenic old valise, its ports of call accumulate as markers on its body. Psychoanalysis in the western hemisphere carries the double burden of its European past as well as the question of the politics of importation, sometimes also known as colonialism. There is no way out of a certain Eurocentrism in charting such genealogies. We should not be afraid of it. Eurocentrism is to be sure not the same thing as Euronarcissism or Europhilia. Rather, psychoanalysis can be understood to have developed in various places as a form of critical confrontation with cultural inheritance. In the clinical setting, that inheritance may be Oedipal and family-centered in a conventional way. On the cultural level, the politics of generational, cultural, and ideological inheritance can be equally vexed and challenging at the level of psychic experience.

Eli Zaretsky's analysis of "the redemption of narcissism" in American psychoanalysis and cultural analysis in the 1960s offers a rich commentary on these issues. Zaretsky describes the rhetoric of narcissism as image-based and specular, as opposed to communicative and word-based. Freud largely disdains narcissism and these rhetorics, though he himself modifies this economy in the important 1914 essay "On Narcissism," after which, as Zaretsky explains, Freud thought of at least some degree of narcissism as a measure of individuation. These rhetorics are highly specific in the context of central European, Catholic-Protestant divides, as addressed above. These European ghosts hover over Zaretsky's analysis of the United States more than he acknowledges, but not – there is no reason to doubt – more than he would admit.

The cultural upheavals of the 1960s in the United States can thus be understood as a reshuffling of boundaries between private and public experience, or between "self" and "world," terms that Zaretsky traces, very illuminatingly, to Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Loewenstein's 1946 *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*.[4]

If the Viennese narcissistic image proceeds from the baroque effigy to Klimt's gilded portraits, the U.S. version of the 1960s (a time when those Klimt portraits

began to appear on dormitory walls along with bumper stickers such as "Mahler Grooves") moved directly into consumer culture and advertising, much to the horror of many émigré analysts. Yet one must take care not to trivialize the 1960s, whose sons, in the United States, faced most directly the scourge of the Vietnam War. And here Zaretsky is right to understand this new mix of private and public, sexual and political counterculture as class-based. The middle-class youth that refused the logic of Vietnam had every right to want to protect itself, as sorry a comment that might be on the relative lack of response by the same class group to the current war in Iraq, which does not directly threaten them through a draft.

Jane Russo's map of psychoanalysis's Brazilian trajectory also interrogates the relations between the private and public, between the possible inward anti-political turn that Schorske saw in Viennese modernism and the political discourse that Zaretsky sees in the United States in the 1960s. Russo aligns the years of military dictatorship in Brazil with "the so-called 'psychoanalytic boom.'" Yet more like Zaretsky than like Schorske, and clearly cognizant of the post-feminist reshuffling of the private/public boundaries, Russo sees the "race to the couch" more as counterculture than as withdrawal.

From Russo's picture of Adelheid Koch, who arrived in Sao Paulo from Berlin in 1936, to the world that Mariano Ben Plotkin described in his book *Freud in the Pampas,* the psychoanalytic world in Brazil and Argentina remained powerfully imprinted by European immigration, as it did in the United States. As "the image of the 'crazy migrant' became an important element in the Argentine popular imagination during the first decades of the [20th] century," Plotkin argues, psychiatry "became part of a larger medical apparatus set up by the state to control the new urban masses." [p. 16] To an extent, then, psychoanalysis figured as a response of the émigrés, a way of carving a place for themselves in this new world.

The paper that Mariano Plotkin and Sergio Visacovsky contribute here relates to the earlier one that Visacovsky read at the LASA meetings in San Juan. There, he offered a reading of the Lacanian turn in the 1960s and 70s in Argentina as an increasing interiorization of psychoanalysis in a context in which political engagement was increasingly restricted. Thus the post-political interiorization of psychoanalysis in the 1960s and 70s can be understood to duplicate the post-liberal moment of the Austrian fin-de-siècle.

The relation of Lacanianism to the military dictatorship of 1976-83 is a fascinating question. Visacovsky and Russo both affirm that Lacan entered the profession through literary scholarship, a portrait consistent with Zaretsky's integration of Lacan into his U.S.-focused story. Zaretsky's reminder that Lacan's models are image-based, as in the mirror stage, adds a fascinating new dimen-

sion to the Latin American discourse. This, as in the Viennese origin, has to do with Catholicism and the culture of the image. The enormous attention paid to Lacan and Foucault in recent years, certainly in the United States, has not found interesting their profiles as Catholic thinkers, reforming and forming Catholic symbolic universes, deploying Catholic tropes such as image, spectacle, and theater. This work remains to be done. Scholars in the United States seem to be largely tone deaf to the issue, and scholars in France perhaps too close to it.

Bruno Bosteels's paper affirms, finally, the compatibility of migratory and multidisciplinary energies. "No history of psychoanalysis would be complete," he proposes, "without taking into account . . . creative – fictive or artistic – development beyond the clinical and institutional settings in the strict sense." Freud himself affirmed that the poets knew the unconscious before psychoanalysis rationalized it. One wonders, too, whether Latin America is unique. Perhaps it is unusually intense, and that because of the intensity of theatrical and image-based realities, legacies of the European baroque in an avalanche effect with indigenous discourses, traditions, and visualities. Mexico's most incisive observers have affirmed this alchemy, from the muralists to the indigenous writers (Paz comes perhaps first to mind) to those attracted from elsewhere (Malcolm Lowry, for example).

A dreamscape-novel by Alicia Steimberg, *Call Me Magdalena,* from 1992, reveals at various points the content and context of Latin America's unpacking of its European pasts when its important baggage is unpacked. The following passage is emblematic of the novel and of the migratory rhythms under discussion in my comments here. This is not globalization, as the world it invokes is not at all flat. It is specific, vexed, thick, and infinitely nuanced.

> It would be interesting to find out whether or not, when Freddy's father lived in Budapest, the other Hungarians thought he was a Hungarian Jew or a Jewish Hungarian, but at this stage of the game no one really cares. For its inhabitant, Buenos Aires is the center of the world, and all other places, for example, London, Paris, New York, even Madrid and Rome, are very far away; so why even mention anyplace as remote as Budapest? So the two male children of this naturalized Hungarian Jewish Argentine attended a rather expensive private English school and chose rugby as their sport.[5]

NOTES

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1. *El Estado y las políticas de la memoria: archivos, museos, y educación. Coloquio Internacional sobre políticas públicas de memoria colectiva.*
2. *Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*. See the brochure, "Archivo de la DIPBA," published by the Comisión Provincial de la Memoria. See also their website: www.comisionporlamemoria.org.
3. Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).
4. It would be very interesting to determine whether this literature shared any responsibility for the evolution of Hannah Arendt's reliance on "the world" as the polis, a category she draws at least explicitly from the Greeks and from Lessing's German Enlightenment.
5. Alicia Steimberg, *Call Me Magdalena*, trans. Andrea Labinger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 64.