

the fact that, willingly or not, we have internalized and to some extent naturalized categories and forms of thinking originating in it. In that sense, a number of the problems associated with writing the history of psychoanalysis should not be very different from those associated with the task of historicizing other transnational systems of thought or beliefs that have shaped contemporary culture. If this is true, then a space opens up for fruitful comparative work. It would be very interesting, for instance, to compare the forms and circuits of reception, circulation and implantation of two systems of thought and beliefs as different as Marxism and psychoanalysis in one or more cultural space. That would certainly be revealing about the nature of those systems, the articulation of the transnational and the local dimensions, and it would also shed light on the cultural spaces under analysis. But in order to do so, we must first distance ourselves as researchers from the object. Since we are at the same time the scholar and the 'native', the first operation we must perform, before entering into a dialogue with the object, is a kind of 'reverse anthropology' consisting of recognizing it as the 'other'. Doing this requires an attitude of perplexity before the object, and this is bound to be a painful and by no means risk-free operation, since questioning such central elements of the cultural framework in which we live implies, to some extent, questioning constitutive elements of our own subjectivity.

21. In Praise of Ghosts

Uriel Orlow

Since fate, itself the true order of eternal recurrence, can only be called temporal in an inauthentic, that is parasitical sense, its manifestations seek out time-space. They stand in the narrow frame of midnight, an opening in the passage of time, in which the same ghostly image constantly reappears.

Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*¹

In the folds of time: *lieux de mémoire* [sites of memory]

In his essay 'Time and the Other', Jean Laplanche describes four levels on which thinking about time usually takes place:

- Level I: cosmological time, the time of the world
- Level II: perceptual time, the time of our immediate consciousness
- Level III: the time of memory, the process of temporalisation of our individual project
- Level IV: the time of history, the time of human societies²

About the last he writes:

1 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928]], trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), 135.

2 Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness* [*La Révolution copernicienne inachevée* [1992]], trans. by John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999), 238.

Level IV, the time of history, implies not only temporalisation like level III but recapitulation. Without question historical societies may be defined as those whose archives exist, those which have their written memory and not just a memory incorporated into manners, customs, institutions, myths, etc. There can of course be a history of individual temporalisation, in other words a recapitulation of the history of level III. (Laplanche, 238)

The latter, where a historical process of recapitulation is applied to the temporalization of the individual, represents the psychoanalytical case study which Laplanche goes on to discuss in his essay. A similar mechanism, if of a wider span, would be at work in the history of the world (that is, natural or cosmological history) where historical chronology (for example, that of evolutionary theory) is applied to nature and matter. However, beyond the combinatory permutations, what is striking in this model is the spatial metaphor underlying its organization, its topography. The stratification of temporality – if only for the purpose of categorization – does not simply spatialize time by separating different kinds of temporality but also creates an implicit Hegelian hierarchy where history, the time of humanity, towers high *above* the time of the world, as it were, looking down on matter, perception and memory. Henri Bergson's potent critique of the spatialization of time is well known, including his repeated attacks on the misuse of spatial metaphors when talking about temporal phenomena or concepts.³ But what if thinking time through space did not just mask the true nature of either but, instead, revealed something about their intertwining, an embeddedness that itself needs to be thought further?

Moving in the opposite direction to Laplanche's psychoanalytical case study and taking France as an exemplar, Pierre Nora is concerned with a society whose archives exist, which has its written memory – indeed, more of it than ever before – but which, incorporated into manners, customs, institutions and myths, is disappearing. The broken link between memory and history (between Laplanche's level III and level IV) and the fractured continuity of past, present and future profoundly affects how we *imagine* time and history. Paradoxically, the exponential growth of recording and storage has resulted in an archival heap in front of us, which is so big that it blocks our vision. It is as if we had come full circle and were returning from the idea of a solid, visible, transparent and narratable past to a fractured, invisible and opaque past. Literally mapping this breakdown, Nora proposes

3 See Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* [*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889)], trans. by F. L. Pogson (London: Dover, 2001).

a cartography of *lieux de mémoire*. They are not historical locations anchored in the continuity of memory but sites *and* instances of memory cast in the discontinuity of history: 'These *lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it'.⁴ There is a fundamental paradox at the heart of the *lieux de mémoire*, namely that it is precisely because history besieges memory, undermining its spontaneity and deforming, petrifying its living nature, that *lieux de mémoire* exist.

It is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de mémoire* – moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death; [...] only in a regime of discontinuity are such hallucinations of the past conceivable. (Nora, 12, 17)

Café Odeon, Zürich

After 1933. 1965–8. 1955. In the 1920s. Until 4 a.m. At the end of the 80s. At the end of the 60s. So around 1990. 1972. During the Dada-time. After midnight. In the 70s.

We liked it there. Perhaps it was by chance that it had become our meeting place — we all happened to live nearby. For me it was like a little Paris. There was a sense of the foreign there, it was big, it was not provincial. I don't even know whether it still exists.

Die letzten Tage der Menschheit. Im Westen Nichts Neues.

For me it was really a place of free-thinking, of interesting conversations and people. It is, or has become, a kind of myth. It was an erotic place.

At the height of the experience four different cultural magazines were edited at four separate tables. We didn't feel much of this glorious, poetic past. We only knew about the early days, we heard the stories.

Someone rode through the café on a horse. And later someone else on a motorbike. In my generation. Dancing on the tables. For us everything was always already over. But it was great.

4 Pierre Nora, 'Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations* (no. 26, Spring 1989), 12.

For the young leftists it became a taboo. People changed.

Among the first reminiscences is Stefan Zweig's description of his encounter with James Joyce. And of course Lenin and Trotsky plotting the revolution at a table nearby. Great modern architects drinking coffee side by side – one creating the structure of a new kind of novel, the other planning a utopian polis.

A photograph of Joyce taken at the meeting of the waters (the two Zürich rivers Limmat and Sihl) in the Platzspitz park which, over half a century later, became the needle-park.

In these great times which I knew when they were this small; and which will be small again, if they still have time.

Klaus and Erika Mann.

Else Lasker-Schüler fled to Zürich in 1933 (as did many others around this time including Thomas Mann, who followed a year later). In 1939 the Swiss officials refused to renew her permit and sent her away. She was one of the few who managed to go to Palestine; others were being sent straight back over the border to Germany to meet certain death in a concentration camp. She died poverty-stricken in Jerusalem a few days before the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945.

Today I didn't feel like poetry. I read the paper instead.

Have you heard of Klabund, Marianne Werefkin, Alexander Moissi, Emmy Hennings, René Schickele?

Older artists like Varlin. Young artists like Urs Lüthi. The Dadaists of course. Dürrenmatt and Frisch. Bertolt Brecht and Thomas Mann. The American journalist Dorothy Thompson. Mata Hari, Sophie Täuber, Annette Kolb.

They look at us and see us not seeing them.⁵

⁵ Extracts from Uriel Orlow, *Old Haunt*, single channel video with sound, 14' 42", 2009. Around a table an ensemble of five speakers revisit – in Swiss German dialect and accompanied by wine and cigarettes – their memories of the famous Café Odeon in Zürich: a contemporary, not yet crumbled ruin in whose still intact art nouveau interior lie former utopias, stories and characters. *Old Haunt* reimagines this event as a polyphony of names, dates and anecdotes performed

No longer quite life, not yet death...

Contrary to historical objects (*realia*), *lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality, or rather they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs. [...] this is to suggest that what makes them *lieux de mémoire* is precisely that by which they escape from history. (Nora, 23–4)

What does this mean? How do we understand this notion of temporal excess? And what does this mean for a phenomenology of place and time? *Torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death...* (Nora, 24) Is this not precisely the definition of haunting? *Lieux de mémoire* are populated by ghosts. Indeed, ghosts are always part of the specificity of place. Places are palimpsestically imbued with former social relations, historical spirits and personified experiences; places are *personed*. The social experience of the physical world haunts a place long after its present; ghosts become the internal lining of its phenomenology. The spectre is a felt presence that is not fully present. It reminds us that the past is unfinished business. Derrida points out: 'Haunting is historical, to be sure, but it is not *dated*, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents'.⁶ This differentiation is crucial: ghosts belong neither to the past nor present, they are neither absent nor present and thus defy both temporality and ontology. Their appearance is always a reappearance and they only do so in order to disappear again. Phantoms appear as dialectical images 'in which the Then and the Now come together into a constellation like a flash or lightning'.⁷ Their historicity echoes Benjamin's conception of images:

What distinguishes images from 'essences' of phenomenology is their historical index [...] For the historical index of images does not simply say that they belong to a specific time, it says above all that they only arrive at readability at a specific time. Every present is determined by those images that are synchronic with it: every Now is the Now of a specific cognisability [*das Jetzt einer bestimmten Erkennbarkeit*]. (Benjamin, 1: 577–8)

by a choir of soliloquists who move through harmony and dissonance. Joined by members of the audience, the *a capella* quintet delves into the past but performs in the present.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* [*Spectres de Marx* [1993]], trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 14 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), vol. 5, 578.

Ghosts do not claim authenticity or truth: they provide neither an authentic image of history nor one of time. (All they ask for is cognizability: to be recognized at some time.) Their historical index comes out of time, without being anchored in it; they undermine history as progress, dismantle universal history, fracture the continuum of historicism. The logic of haunting disrupts the idea of chronological time, it desynchronizes time. As such, ghosts cut across all four levels of Laplanche's temporal topography: they hover between – as well as connect – the times of the world, perception, memory and history. That ghosts fall below the threshold of what constitutes historical objects (*realia*) is exactly what makes them so important for historical consciousness. The appearance – neither as image nor in the flesh – of something or someone departed makes them a paradoxical incorporation which crosses the boundary of self and world. To be sure, they are figments of our imagination but this does not mean they are pure fantasy. Abraham and Torok stress that the phantom 'works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography. The imaginings issuing from the presence of the stranger have nothing to do with fantasy strictly speaking'.⁸ Phantoms are not to be confused with the return of the repressed. For a phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious in the first place. Rather, phantoms are encrypted messages by others: 'What haunt us are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others'. (Nora, 171) What interests me about Abraham's conception of the phantom is that it is transpersonal as well as transgenerational. That is, the phantom appears from a concealment (a repression, a forgetting) by someone else, somewhere else, in another time. As such, it is not only an individual hallucination but can also denote a collective haunting. However, the ghostly economy is different in each case: in familial, individual cases of transgenerational haunting, Abraham and Torok write:

the 'phantom effect' progressively fades during its transmission from one generation to the next and [...] finally disappears. Yet this is not at all the case when shared or complementary phantoms find a way of being established as social practices along the lines of *staged words*. We must not lose sight of the fact that to stage a word [...] constitutes an attempt at exorcism, an attempt that is to relieve the unconscious

8 Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, 'Notes on the phantom', in *The Shell and the Kernel* [*L'écorce et le noyau* [1987]], trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 173.

by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm. (Abraham and Torok, 176)

This staging or *mise-en-scène* of the phantom represents another, perhaps the final slippage between the temporal and the spatial. By restoring timelessness to time, ghosts represent a kind of staging, where 'history merges into the setting [*Schauplatz*]' (Benjamin, 92). In other words, in the phantom, history appears no longer in its temporal dimension but becomes an image-space, a scene and thus paradoxically a *mise-en-abîme* of time. (This is exactly what Hamlet expresses in his encounter with the ghost when he exclaims – again using a conscious spatial metaphor – that 'the time is out of joint'.) This *mise-en-abîme* allows us to conceive of history no longer as a chain of events in time – bound by chronology, narration and representation – but in terms of resonating events in space, which are evoked through fragments, alluded to in shards of matter, haunted by *revenants*. This ghostly setting, this *lieu de mémoire*, is rarely the stage of history *per se*, rather it is a *Nebenschauplatz*, a minor location, a temporary constellation like that of a café where people hung out, met, talked about ideas and eventually went their different ways. It is a temporally stratified place, which crosses all four levels of time and falls between them.