



The Ambivalent Translator: Towards a History of Psychoanalytic Translations

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**<TITLE>THE AMBIVALENT TRANSLATOR:
TOWARDS A HISTORY OF PSYCHOANALYTIC TRANSLATIONS**

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<T>In a famous passage in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud stresses that the latent dream-thoughts and the manifest dream-content

<EXT>lie before us like two versions of the same content in two different languages, or rather, the dream-content looks to us like a translation of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, and we are supposed to get to know its signs and laws of grammatical construction by comparing the original and the translation. (Freud, 1999[1900], p. 211)**</EXT>**

<T>This comparison between the act of translating a text and interpreting a dream, a metaphor that recurs with many variations within Freud's work, has left its mark on many theoretical attempts to formulate a general theory of translation. Even if the cultural prestige of psychoanalysis has waned considerably over the last decades, its traces are still palpable within a significant body of recent scholarship that views the history of translation as a project in its own right. This is particularly true of one of the most ambitious of these projects, the bulky *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (Cassin, 2014[2004]), but also, although to a lesser extent, of the *Histoire des traductions en langue française* (Chevrel & Masson, 2012–19), a four-volume encyclopaedic work on the history of translations in the French language spanning five centuries. Both

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collective undertakings are impressive testimonies to the increasing investment in Translation Studies, or *traductologie*, to use the French umbrella term, in the twenty-first century. A number of authors in this field tend to understand translation itself in analogy to the psychoanalytic process of interpretation, in which the relationship of the patient to the analyst is marked by an affective ‘transference’. Thus we hear of a ‘drive’ to translate, and of the ‘translator’s unconscious’ (Berman, 1992[1984]; Venuti, 2002), in which alienating forces of powerful cultural ideologies seem constantly to threaten a translation’s fidelity to the original text. The result is a portrait of the modern translator as a highly ambivalent figure. This strand of theorizing has in turn strongly influenced some of the more recent attempts to retranslate Freud and to come to terms with the previous history of psychoanalytic translations. In the following pages I attempt to redraw this portrait of the ambivalent translator from an entirely different perspective, by following a strictly philological and historical path. A discussion of the seemingly anomalous case of Freud’s first translators and the model it inspired will lead to the formulation of some more general methodological reflections on how we could write the history of translation in psychoanalysis.

<A>I

Equating ‘transference’ and ‘translation’ is a seductive move for anyone who is aware of the fact that, in German, the term *Übertragung*, which psychoanalysts use in a technical sense to designate the patient’s affects and fantasies directed at them, is a possible synonym for *Übersetzung*, the word commonly used for linguistic or symbolic acts of translation. The equation may find corroboration in Freud’s occasional usage of textual metaphors to render what happens during the transference, such as in the ‘Dora’ case, when the patient’s envisioning of the analyst in the place of a parental figure from his or her past is compared to ‘new’ or ‘revised editions’ (*Neuauflagen, Neubearbeitungen*) of a text (Freud 1953[1905], p. 116). But even if we grant the translation the status of some sort of new edition of the original, such a fusion of terms still remains alien to the usages of the word *übersetzen* itself (and its synonym *übertragen*) in Freud’s work.¹ It also matters that these usages are quite

1. In the passage from *The Interpretation of Dreams* quoted in the opening of this essay, Freud uses precisely *Übertragung* as a synonym for *Übersetzung*, which led his translator James Strachey to render the first word as ‘transcript’ and the second as ‘translation’ (Freud, 1953[1900], p. 277), faithful to his ‘general rule of invariably translating a German technical

varied within this vast and heterogeneous corpus of texts: for the translation metaphor seems to encompass not only acts of psychoanalytic interpretation, but also the formation of symptoms and mental processes in general. Sometimes it even designates the entire treatment, such as in the metapsychological paper *The Unconscious*:

<EXT>How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious? It is of course only as something conscious that we know it, after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious. Psycho-analytic work shows us every day that translation of this kind is possible. (Freud, 1957[1915], p. 166)</EXT>

<NP>From this recurrence of the metaphor of translation, which Freud uses to describe a variety of unrelated processes occurring at different levels, it has been assumed that translation is a ‘truly theoretical nodal word’, and even a ‘unified field concept’ which can tie together these processes (Mahony, 1980, p. 461). Such a usage of translation as a kind of master metaphor has been pushed further in the 1980s and 1990s by a number of postmodern literary critics, but against its original signification. Whereas Freud had understood interpretation of distorted utterances as the recovery of meaning, even under the special conditions of the transference, these authors declared that because of its unavoidable affective and unconscious entanglements, *any* act of interpretation or of human reasoning is irremediably distorted. From such a perspective of interpretive nihilism, no attempt at translation can ever hope to escape from ‘the inevitable misconstruing that is unconsciously repeated in human relations’ (Bass, 1985, pp. 138–9; see also Venuti, 2002).

Not by coincidence, the figure of the ‘ambivalent translator’ appeared precisely in this context of an attempt to theorize, borrowing from the psychoanalytic stock of concepts, a seemingly impossible task. In his widely read and influential

term by the same English one’ (Strachey, 1966, p. xix). One may wonder, however, whether metaphors should be treated like technical concepts and whether it is possible and meaningful, even in the case of technical terms which also have their history, to abstract entirely from the context of phrases and passages (to which Strachey rigorously applied the same principle of uniform translation). The limits of such a terminological approach become evident when *Übertragung* is mistranslated as ‘transference’, like in a case discussed below.

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book *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, the French translator Antoine Berman painted his portrait in the following terms:

<EXT>Cultural resistance produces a systematics of deformations that operates on the linguistic and literary levels, and that conditions the translator, whether he wants it or not, whether he knows it or not. The reversible dialectic of fidelity and treason is present in the translator, even in his position as a writer: the pure translator is the one who needs to write starting from a foreign work, a foreign language and a foreign author – a notable detour. On the psychic level, the translator is ambivalent, wanting to force two things: to force his own language to adorn itself with strangeness, and to force the other language to trans-port itself into his mother tongue. He presents himself as a writer, but is only a re-writer. He is an author, but never The Author. The translated work is a work, but it is not The Work. This network of ambivalences tends to deform the pure aim of translation and to graft itself onto the ideological deformation discussed above. And to strengthen it. (Berman, 1992[1984], pp. 5–6) </EXT>

<T>It is obvious that Berman's account is a variation of two old themes: one is the ever-recurring problem of fidelity, captured by the familiar saying *traduttore-traditore* which assumes that treason is unavoidable in the act of translation; the other one is the argument, first developed by Schleiermacher (1982[1813]), that the only viable approach open to the translator is to bend the target language in order to bring the reader as close as possible to the original's linguistic and conceptual world. This rather classical portrait of the translator standing between two languages and cultures, with the obligation to ensure that the radical foreignness of the text is not erased in its translation, is charged by Berman with the psychological notion of a constant ambivalence due to an inner conflict.² The general assumption that any act of translation is necessarily ambivalent, however, is fraught with numerous problems, starting with the postulate of linguistic, cultural and ideological systems that are taken

2. It is not without irony that the English translation of Berman's book often goes wrong, starting with a flawed rendering of the title itself as *The Experience of the Foreign*. The French word *épreuve* has many connotations ('test', 'examination', 'ordeal'), but here it clearly means the challenge to render the foreign work in terms of the language and culture of the translator without distorting it in an ethnocentric way.

to be monolithic blocks, exerting constant pressure on the translator's psyche in the form of some sort of structural unconscious. One may have equal doubts about the only possible cure, too neatly tailored to fit the purpose:

<EXT>The translator has to 'subject himself to analysis', to localize the systems of deformation that threaten his practice and operate unconsciously on the level of his linguistic and literary choices – systems that depend simultaneously on the registers of language, of ideology, of literature, and of the translator's mental make-up. One could almost call this a *psychoanalysis of translation*, similar to Bachelard's *psychoanalysis of the scientific spirit*: it involves the same ascetic, the same self-scrutinizing operation. (Berman, 1992[1984]), p. 6)</EXT>

<NP>Despite such gestures towards a distinctively French epistemological tradition, Berman's ideal of a pure translation, that would be as faithful as possible to the original and finally stripped from any possible ethnocentric bias, stems from the reconstruction of a tradition that is quintessentially German in spirit (besides Schleiermacher, embodied by Herder, Goethe or Hölderlin and later echoed in Walter Benjamin's essay on the 'task of the translator'). Rather than being a historical study *stricto sensu* of this German tradition, *L'épreuve de l'étranger* constitutes more of a manifesto of the coming science of *traductologie*, deliberately modelled on Foucault's *archéologie* and Derrida's *grammatologie*, intending to fight what another influential author in this field has called the 'translator's invisibility' (Venuti, 1995). That the will to create a new science resonated strongly with the interests of a relatively young profession in search of social recognition may not come as a surprise. Whereas the plea to make translators visible is fully justified and highly important, the fabrication of such seemingly noble intellectual pedigrees tends to foster theoretical dogmatism and hinder the understanding of the actual social and historical conditions of translating practices.³

3. Not by coincidence, the ahistorical and dogmatic character of *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, with its references to psychoanalysis as a kind of master discourse, appealed to the team of translators which would produce, under the stewardship of psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche, the first complete edition of Freud's works in French (the *Œuvres Complètes* at the Presses Universitaires de France, which began to appear in 1988 and was finally completed in 2019). Very much in the spirit of Berman, their own quite schematic account of the history of their

<T>Historical work on translation within psychoanalysis has been attempted, but in a quite limited way. Most of the existing studies on psychoanalytic translations, with a strong preference given to Freud's work, have been conducted within a framework emphasizing the resistances, obstacles and distortions on the level of clinical or cultural transmission.⁴ The approach I am adopting here differs both from *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and the historical (or transhistorical) study of psychoanalytic cultures, in that it seeks to reconstruct the specific models of translation that were in use across various linguistic or cultural areas, and to retrace their effects. In the initial phase of psychoanalysis, reading and writing were still an integral part of the practice, both for analysts and patients, due to the strong emphasis Freud had put on the self-analysis of dreams as the obligatory entry point. Studying the history of editions and translations is therefore essential for any understanding of the genesis of the psychoanalytic movement itself, provided that the historical-philological approach can also integrate the specific epistemic characteristics of its own object.⁵

The first model of translation that came to the fore in the emergence of psychoanalysis was closely tied to Freud's famous self-analysis as the empirical

predecessors dismisses their achievements as an act of betrayal due to the 'Latin spirit' (*le génie latin*) and the search for 'elegant' solutions, inevitably leading to the ethnocentric distortions. The ultimate outcome of this programme – 'the text, the whole text, and nothing but the text' (Laplanche et al., 1992[1989], p. 143) – is a translation which tries to 'stick' as closely to the original German syntax as possible, declaring this to be some sort of a 'Freudian French', an idiom full of questionable neologisms to render colloquial German expressions that are not introduced as concepts in the original. From the very beginning, this approach has sparked controversy and ultimately led to various projects of retranslation. There is no room here to enter into these debates and the problems that these new translations raise. A more extensive analysis of this topic will be undertaken in a forthcoming book.

4. If we restrict ourselves to English and French, which has been the focus of most of the studies on Freud's translation so far, such a reductive model of transmission and lack of philological rigour flaws a number of works on the history of these respective corpuses of translation: two prominent examples are Steiner (1987, 1991) and de Mijolla (2010), which is more a compilation than a continuous narrative. A more recent account of the history of psychoanalytic translations into French (Giboux, 2019) equally fails to do justice to the diversity of this field, since it evaluates the work of earlier translators from the perspective of Laplanche's team of the *Œuvres Complètes*, endorsing their choices uncritically. More recently, Forrester & Cameron (2016) provide a fresh perspective on the case of Strachey's Standard Edition within the boundaries of a micro-study of the particular reception of Freudian psychoanalysis in Cambridge.

5. For the general argument about the formative role of reading Freud, see Forrester (1997); for the historical sociology of texts and reading and writing practices within the early psychoanalytic movement, see Marinelli (2009) and Marinelli & Mayer (2003[2002]).

backbone of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Based on previous forms of psychological self-observation, note-taking and collecting dreams, it is characteristic of his attempt to establish psychoanalysis as a new science of the intimate (Mayer 2013[2002], pp. 198–221). The effectiveness of the technique of self-analysis depends both on the possibility of translation and repetition. The fragmentary character of Freud's interpretations is essentially linked to the exposition of his method, in that it demands of all readers that they be ready to step into the author's shoes, to embark on a journey of self-discovery by analysing their own dreams, slips or misperformances. In a crucial passage, Freud asks the reader 'to make my interests his own for quite a while, and to plunge, along with me, into the minutest details of my life; for a transference [*Übertragung*] of this kind is peremptorily demanded by our interest in the hidden meaning of dreams' (Freud, 1953[1900], p. 106). We may stumble over the word 'transference' in the English translation by James Strachey, which is misleading here, since it suggests the use of a distinctive psychoanalytic concept that did not yet exist in late 1899 when these lines were published.⁶ In the present context, *Übertragung* clearly has either the figurative meaning of 'translation' (as a synonym for *Übersetzung*), or is being used in the sense of a 'transfer of interests'. Endorsing Freud's particular interests and immersing oneself in 'the minutest details' of his life entails an act of translation: readers can only come to an understanding of the dream examples and their interpretations if they can set them in their respective intellectual, cultural, political and linguistic contexts. The inevitable difficulties they encounter could therefore be described in terms of the 'untranslatable' (referring in this case to a quite heterogeneous list of objects: local expressions of the dreamer or patient; allusions to certain works of art or literature specific to his or her culture; but also chains of associations including words from various languages, often of homonymic character).⁷

6. The same mistake is to be found in all existing English translations (Freud, 1913, p. 88; 1999[1900], p. 84; 2006[1900], pp. 117–18).

7. The matter turns out to be even more complex, if we recognize that, since Freud's first development of the translation metaphor in the study of the neuroses and of dreams, processes of translation are to be distinguished at various levels. In a schematic way, one could first distinguish an 'ekphrastic' level, i.e. the translation of images into verbal expression, and then a second level, which takes place while free associating to the elements of dreams, and which is characterized by various translational acts showing the dreamer in command of many different languages in which she or he is not a native speaker (hence Timpanaro's coinage of a 'polyglot unconscious' [Timpanaro, 1976]). The act of translation to be performed by the reader of *The Interpretation of Dreams* who must shift from Freud's linguistic and cultural

The historical model of self-analysis implying such acts of translation marked the first two decades of psychoanalysis (roughly from 1896 to the end of the First World War), before it was increasingly superseded by formal training analysis and a system of supervision installed by specialized institutions. *Übertragung*, in the technical sense of an affective ‘transference’, would increasingly matter, once Freud began to conceptualize the relationship between analyst and patient in those terms between 1905 and 1915.⁸ Even if reading, translating and editing Freud’s own texts were practices that initially took place outside a clinical setting, the relational and affective aspects of these practices would become an essential component of the model of translation specific to psychoanalysis. We therefore need to study more closely how Freud’s translators worked in response to this model, which, firstly, assumed that these translators were invariably potential future analysts, and secondly, demanded both a strong intellectual and emotional investment, at the eventual cost of a literal and complete rendering of the original text.⁹

The case of the first English translations offers a privileged entry point, not because of the ensuing cultural hegemony of the United States, but because English was (along with French) one of Freud’s working languages, from which he himself had translated and in which he occasionally published. Equally important is the fact that the translations into these two languages, in addition to those undertaken in Spanish, were to gain strategic importance for the further global transmission of

context to his own would occur on a third level, meeting problems of untranslatability on the second level.

8. For a short historical outline of the term and its shifting meanings, see Mayer (2022[2016], pp. 79–83). Although this should be obvious, terms such as ‘transference’ and ‘countertransference’ will not, in the following, be used in a therapeutic perspective, but as ‘actor’s categories’ in an ethnographic sense.

9. A first, preliminary outline to the problem of translation in the early psychoanalytic movement has been developed in a detailed study of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in Marinelli & Mayer (2003[2002], pp. 127–37). In the following, I will use the notion of historical models of translation, the indication ‘historical’ designating not only that they existed at a certain period of time, but also that they do not conform necessarily to given philological standards, be it of the present or the more recent past. This bears some resemblance to the notion of the ‘translator’s manual’, derived from Quine’s famous thought experiment on radical translation in anthropology (Quine, 1960), referring to the particular criteria or standards used by certain translations, mostly implicit, which may be entirely incompatible (see Kristal, 2002). More recently, two historical fruitful approaches to translation have been developed, in the context of the early modern period, by Chartier (2021) and Ginzburg (2017).

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psychoanalysis.¹⁰ For English and French, Freud granted exclusive status to one specific translator: for the Anglo-Saxon world, this was Abraham Arden Brill (1874–1948), a US émigré originally from Galicia, who, between 1908 and 1918, translated all of Freud’s major books published up to that time; for French, the doctor Samuel Jankélévitch (1869–1951), who had emigrated to France from Russia and who worked mostly for the publisher Payot, held a similar monopoly during the 1920s, although a number of other translation projects led to an increasing dispersion, with competing publishing houses producing the first translations of central works such as the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*.¹¹ As for Italian, the other language where Freud could claim, alongside with Spanish, some competence, his favourite translator would become his Triestine disciple Edoardo Weiss.

All these decisions were to have far-reaching effects, especially in view of the increased efforts to standardize the vocabulary of psychoanalysis in various languages. But restricting the scope opened up by these various translations to a mere question of terminology and lexicography, as has so often been done, or to the emergence of distinct different national cultures of psychoanalysis, misses the intricate and unexpected ways in which they were interrelated, and in which they responded, positively or negatively, to a model originally embodied by Brill, Freud’s first English translator. In order to seize its features, we must therefore enter into a more detailed discussion of this particular case, which has so far been ignored, for reasons that will become clear in due course.

Brill was born in 1874 in Kańczuga, a town in Galicia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now Poland), to Jewish parents. He left Galicia for the United States in his adolescence, and rose quickly by his own efforts through the ranks of the medical profession. During a stay in Europe in the years 1907–8, working at the Burghölzli hospital in Zurich, he set out to translate, together with the

10. This fact has been largely ignored by most cultural and social histories of psychoanalysis, which is not so surprising in the light of their focus on political and institutional factors.

11. *Les Trois Essais sur la Théorie de la Sexualité* were published in 1923 by Gallimard in a translation by the psychoanalyst Blanche Jouve-Reverchon, and the seventh edition of the *Traumdeutung*, under the title *La Sciences des rêves*, in 1926 by Felix Alcan in a translation by Ignace Meyerson. Princess Marie Bonaparte, who would become a major player in the psychoanalytic movement and turn into Freud’s favourite French *porte-parole*, arrived comparatively late on the scene. From the late 1920s, most of the Gallimard translations were produced under her stewardship. See Mayer (forthcoming).

neurologist Frederick Peterson from Columbia University, C.G. Jung's book on dementia praecox.¹² In 1908, Brill approached Freud first via Jung who recommended him as a potential translator of a selection from the *Studies on Hysteria* which would have entirely omitted the contributions written by Breuer. Despite the fact that Freud considered the project to be both 'impossible' and 'historically unjust', because it would not have contained the essential first case of Anna O.,¹³ the project met ultimately with approval, and went to press the following year (Freud, 1909). On his return to the United States, Brill took up a position at the Department of Neurology and Psychiatry at Columbia University, where a number of colleagues showed great interest in the works of Freud, as he was eager to report:

<EXT>The editor of the journal of N. & M. D. [Nervous and Mental Diseases] wishes me to translate the Drei Abhandlungen [*Three Essays*], he is willing to publish it. Quite a number of men including Prof. F. Peterson are anxious to have a translation of it. I have translated some of it and if you will be kind enough to give me your permission I can finish it within a few weeks. I shall now continue to translate your works and would ask you to please consider me as your sole English translator. Your works are not known here because the great majority of Americans and English do not read German. Everybody here who knows anything about your work urges me to translate them. Quite some interest is taken now in dreams and Dr. Peterson thinks it very desirable to translate it [i.e. *The Interpretation of Dreams*] and also the Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens [*Psychopathology of Everyday Life*]. I looked them over with a view of finding out whether they lend themselves to translation and found that only a few examples here and there are untranslatable and this does not in any way detract anything from their value.¹⁴</EXT>

<NP>One could ask why Freud accepted Brill's request to figure as his 'sole English translator', especially when one takes into account that English was not the

12. For a short biographical account on Brill, see Romm (1966).

13. See Letter from S. Freud to C.G. Jung, 17 February 1908 (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 120).

14. Letter in English from A.A. Brill to S. Freud, 18 July 1908, *Sigmund Freud Papers, General Correspondence, Library of Congress SFP* (in the following abbreviated SFP). Since this correspondence is partly in English and German, the original language will be indicated in each case.

latter's mother tongue, and that he interfered from the beginning in the original German texts by arranging and framing them in new ways.¹⁵ The answer to both questions is to a large extent to be found in the strong emphasis on self-analytical knowledge during this initial period: editions and translations were not understood as definite texts, but rather as vehicles designed to transpose Freud's theories and techniques to the test ground of their readers' own realm of experience. New collections such as the *Selected Papers*, then, were composed as introductions that were to be probed mostly by specialists in a different linguistic and cultural context based on their personal observations. As Freud succinctly put it 1909, in a letter to the American neurologist James Jackson Putnam, 'my work demands from the reader only this: that he seek to undergo the experiences on which it is based'.¹⁶ As a consequence, successfully self-acquired analytic experience counted more than language skills or qualities of literary style, when it came to choosing a translator. The fact that Brill had learned English only at the age of 15, after emigrating to the United States, was for Freud of less importance than the conviction that his new disciple had received solid training at the Burghölzli Clinic in Zurich, the first important psychiatric institution that had taken up his theories, and then during a few sessions with the master himself, on walks through the streets of Vienna.¹⁷

From the very beginning, Freud set the bar high by stressing the 'untranslatable' character of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In 1911, when the third edition appeared, he added a footnote stressing that the 'dream, indeed, is so intimately connected with linguistic expression that [...] every language has its own dream language. A dream is, as a rule, not translatable into a foreign language, and this is equally true of a book such as the present one' (Freud, 1911, p. 71). However, one should note (and this point is essential) that this problem of untranslatability concerns only a part of Freud's work. It is mainly the triad of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the *Psychopathology* and *Jokes*, large sections of the *Introductory Lectures*

15. The *Selected Papers on Hysteria and other Psychoneuroses* (Freud, 1909) consisted of a selection of four chapters from the *Studies on Hysteria* (the preliminary note, co-written with Breuer, the final chapter on psychotherapeutic treatment, and the cases of Miss Lucy R. and Elisabeth von R.) and some articles from the two volumes of the *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre* (published 1906 and 1909 in Vienna by Deuticke).

16. Letter from S. Freud to J. Putnam, 5 December 1909 (Hale, 1971, p. 90).

17. The analytical *Spaziergang* was a common practice for initiating many of his first disciples. A reflection of this early practice can be found in Freud's famous interpretation of Jensen's *Gradiva* (Mayer, 2012).

and the case histories (most notably the ‘Ratman’ and the ‘Wolfman’), in short, when analysis is particularly dependent on linguistic expression and puns and where almost every single element of the ‘web’ of associations has to be footnoted or explained in brackets by the translator.

The fact that *The Interpretation of Dreams* was initially conceived as an initiation into the psychoanalytic method, a surrogate for a future methodological treatise, meant that the possibility of translation was inseparably linked to that of its cultural and institutional transmission. As a solution, Freud pointed out to C.G. Jung in 1908 that his book ‘would have to be rewritten in each language, which would be a deserving task for an *Englishman*’.¹⁸ That this was the major rule to be followed within the initial model of translation is shown by the correspondences with a number of the first translators. To his first French translator Samuel Jankélévitch, Freud wrote in 1920 with regard to *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the *Psychopathology* that in them ‘so much depends on the wording that the translator himself would have to be an analyst and replace the material that I have provided with his own, new material from his experience, as it has been the case in various translations’.¹⁹ In the same year, Freud assured his Triestine disciple Edoardo Weiss who had undertaken the first Italian translation of the *Introductory Lectures*, that ‘the way in which you translate dreams, slips, and mistakes, by substituting the examples of your own, is of course the only right procedure’.²⁰

The requirement that the translator be ideally a psychoanalyst, who was entitled to replace the author’s examples with his own ones, essentially authorized the translator to rewrite the book, at least partially, in the target language. Brill’s translation of the third edition of the *The Interpretation of Dreams* offers a demonstration of the problems that this model was supposed to solve. Due to multiple complications with the publisher George Allan, who had even demanded parts of the text be cut – a request that Freud considered ‘shameful’,²¹ but to which he finally agreed in order to save the project – the English translation was not published until March 1913. Brill, who in the preface insisted on the ‘almost insurmountable difficulties’ that he had encountered in this translation (Brill in Freud, 1913, p. xii)

18. Letter from S. Freud to C.G. Jung, 17 February 1908 (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 120).

19. Letter from S. Freud to S. Jankélévitch, 28 June 1920, SFP.

20. Letter from S. Freud to E. Weiss, 7 November 1920, SFP (English translation quoted after Weiss, 1970, p. 29).

21. Letter in German from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 31 March 1913, SFP.

resorted to the solution offered by Freud's favoured model and would occasionally replace the author's examples with dreams of his own patients. The greatest difficulties arose in Chapter Five, in the discussion of condensation, one of the fundamental **mechanisms of the dream-work**. Words are frequently treated 'in dreams as things and therefore undergo the same combinations as the representations of things [*Dingvorstellungen*]', which leads to 'comical and bizarre neologisms [*Wortschöpfungen*]'.²² Brill omitted two examples given by Freud, and noted that he had replaced them with an example from one of his own patients suffering from anxiety attacks. The combination of the words 'uclamparia – wet' (Figure 1) that appears in her dream narrative produces associations referring to a trip to Italy to treat these nervous attacks, which she believed to be due to a malaria infection, during which she drank a eucalyptus liqueur in a monastery. According to Brill's analysis, the fusion of the words 'malaria' and 'eucalyptus' produced the composite *uclamparia*, while 'wet' evoked 'dry', in this case the name of a Mr Dry 'whom she would have married if it had not been for his clinging to the disgusting alcohol-habit' (Freud, 1913, p. 278) (Figure 2).

<Insert figs 1 and 2 here>

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<CAPTION>**Figure 1. Example by Brill inserted into Chapter Five of Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1913**

<CAPTION>**Figure 2. Example by Brill inserted into Chapter Five of Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1913**

Even if the mechanisms of dreams are equally operative in different languages, as the translator tried to show with this example, translating dream symbols posed particular difficulties. In this context, it mattered that Brill's first translation was produced precisely in the period when Freud added to the book an extensive discussion of symbolic interpretation in the sub-chapter 'Typical Dreams'.²³ Whereas the symbolic interpretation allowed the first psychoanalysts convenient shortcuts ('a tie is a penis'), that were often the target of criticisms, the transfer to another cultural

22. Freud (1913, pp. 277–8); Freud (1972[1900], pp. 297–8).

23. This discussion of dream symbols in this section D of Chapter Five was, from the fourth edition (Freud, 1914), transferred to the new sub-chapter E of Chapter Six. For more details, see Marinelli & Mayer (2003[2002]). Freud's methodological shift towards symbolic interpretation is also linked to the German translation of Artemidorus' famous dream book and its various usages among the first generation of psychoanalysts (see Mayer, 2018).

and linguistic context necessitated detours and even substitutes. Accordingly, Brill noted that the symbol 'king' or 'emperor' as a common representation of the father within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had to be replaced for American dreamers often by 'the President, the Governor, and the Mayor' (Freud, 1913, p. 246). The most popular and iconic case, the 'cravat as a symbol for the penis', equally needed commentary:

<EXT>In this country, where the word 'necktie' is almost exclusively used, the translator has found it to be a symbol of a burdensome woman from whom the dreamer longs to be freed – 'necktie – something tied to my neck like a heavy weight – my fiancée,' are the associations from the dream of a man who eventually broke his marriage engagement. (Freud, 1913, p. 247)</EXT>

Andreas Mayer 7/8/23 21:39

Commentaire [1]: Maybe we should indicate somehow in the reference that this is Brill's text

<T>Brill's repeated interventions in the original text underscore to what extent *The Interpretation of Dreams* was conceived in those decisive years not primarily as a work dominated by one single voice, but as a project potentially open to many other voices.

<A>III

<T>Freud's choice and his persistence in authorizing Brill to translate all his major books published up until 1914 would, however, provoke tensions within the early psychoanalytic movement. Ernest Jones, soon to be a key figure of the British group, would turn into the harshest critic of Brill's translations, a position which he held from this point until the end of his life. In his biography of Freud, he gave the following account:

<EXT>Freud himself was a highly gifted and swift translator, but he translated very freely, and I do not think he ever understood what an immense and difficult task it was going to be to render accurately and edit (!) his own writings. Brill's evidently imperfect knowledge of both English and German soon aroused my misgiving, so I offered to read through his manuscript and submit for his consideration any suggestions that occurred to me; my name was not to be mentioned. After all, English was my mother-tongue, whereas Brill had picked it up in the unfavourable surroundings of his early days in

New York. [. . .] There is no need for me to stigmatize Brill's translations; others have done so freely enough. When I remarked to Freud a couple of years later that it was a pity his work was not being presented to the English-speaking public in a more worthy form, he replied: 'I'd rather have a good friend than a good translator,' and went on to accuse me of being jealous of Brill. (Jones, 1955, pp. 50–1)</EXT>

<T>Jones's retrospective evaluation is revealing in many ways, if one takes into account that it was written almost half a century after the event. It judges Brill's translations of Freud's work (and, one must note, even the latter's earlier translations of Charcot and Bernheim) according to philological standards to be followed in a definitive edition of the text. In that sense, any translation must not only satisfy the condition of fidelity to the original, which demands high linguistic and other technical skills, but also present the text in its complete form. Unsurprisingly, the yardstick applied by Jones was provided by Strachey's Standard Edition, which had just begun to appear, and which was opposed in every respect to the model of translation practised by Brill – and in certain respects also by Freud, as will become apparent.²⁴ It seems obvious, however, that criteria like absolute fidelity and completeness could not serve as primary virtues in the translation of texts which, a few decades earlier, were considered to be provisional formulations in the course of an emerging new science and not as 'classics'.²⁵

But there is another element worth noting in Jones's presentation: the strong emphasis on the emotional bond between author and translator, dramatically put in the mouth of Freud, as his biographer pleases to do on repeated occasions. The affective dimension, couched here naively in psychological terms, cannot serve as a viable

24. There was, however, a significant difference with regard to the liberties taken by Freud in his translations of Charcot and Bernheim from the 1880s and 1890s. Those works were linked in essential ways to a strategy of transferring new experimental and therapeutic techniques from the French to the Austrian and German clinical contexts. In that sense, what was at stake in Freud's German rendering of the French clinicians' work was the translation of a scientific model that met with substantial resistance in the clinical culture of Vienna (see Mayer, 2013[2002]). That Freud added his own observations in critical footnotes to his later translations of Charcot was consistent with this strategy.

25. On Brill's original request, Freud had written to Jung: 'Since I have not yet had the honour of being translated, what you write is a great temptation. But I shall resist it. [. . .] [M]y case histories in the *Studies* are no less antiquated than Breuer's theories and not worth translating.' Letter from S. Freud to C.G. Jung, 17 February 1908 (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 120).

explanation; its functions only come to the fore when it is not placed in the epistemic and institutional contexts of the early psychoanalytic movement.

Freud's strong emotional investment in Brill as his chief translator in the Anglo-Saxon world, then, was not merely a personal affair, but was inextricably bound up with institutional politics. Together with Putnam of Harvard University and Smith Ely Jelliffe, who had founded the 'Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series' with William A. White in 1907, Brill as the first major training analyst in the United States was to play a key role in the 'conquest of the >American market<'.²⁶ Freud's conviction of Brill's value as a disciple, translator and future leading figure in the young American psychoanalytic movement rested on a strong mutual attachment, that he attributed, in this case, to their common secular Judaism. In 1920, he noted that 'from our first acquaintance I put a complete confidence in you, not shaken to this day, such as a Jew can only put in another Jew, and I thought highly of your abilities as a scientific man and a physician'.²⁷ Freud saw 'something unalterable' in this bond, and 'an intimacy of the kind present in blood relationships',²⁸ which he fortified by making connections to Brill's family, taking over the sponsorship of his daughter Gioia, born in 1911, whose name – via the detour of Italian – was itself a tribute to the master.

However, the publication of the English translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams* marked the beginning of a crisis. In 1914, the translations of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and of the book on jokes (*Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*, in Brill's arguable translation of the title [Freud 1916a]) were largely completed, but the latter book took so much time that Brill had to neglect two other projects dear to Freud: *Totem and Taboo* and *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*.²⁹ The excessive amount of time devoted to jokes seemed again justified by the intrinsic untranslatability of most of its material:

<EXT>I have to spend hours and days in search of fitting examples.

Translation as such offers no difficulties for me. [. . .] I have plenty of material when it comes to dreams and psychopathology but I have to hunt for

26. Letter in German from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 2 December 1909, SFP (the latter expression in English).

27. Letter in English from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 19 January 1920, SFP..

28. Letter in English from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 25 April 1923, SFP..

29. See Freud (1916c, 1918a).

witticisms that would fit in with your thoughts and do justice to your own.
That accounts for the tardiness.³⁰

In contrast to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud had republished the book on jokes almost unchanged for the second edition of 1912. One notes that the few passages that had been modified pointed already to the intimate connection between author and translator: they include examples from an article published by Brill the previous year, whose primary aim was to prove the untranslatability of the jokes and puns treated in *Der Witz*, aptly grouped in a section culminating in a gloss on the famous ‘modification joke’ – *Traduttore-Traditore!*³¹ The English translation, then, constituted a further step in confronting this problem, by showing to what extent the emulation of the initial translational model amounted to a constant revision not only of the original text, but also of the newly incorporated material provided by the translator. And as Brill’s own formulations suggest, adopting Freud’s model was in this case not understood in terms of a mere substitution of Austrian jokes by fitting American examples (like in the case of dream symbols), but as a far more laborious process intended to meet the challenge of the author’s interpretive virtuoso performance, often condensed in the juxtaposition of examples from a variety of linguistic contexts.

Brill’s slowness was also due to the fact that he had to negotiate with the publishers, and because he regularly submitted his translations to other colleagues for proofreading to make them less vulnerable. And then there was the relational and affective aspect of the translation work that would increasingly be seen on both sides as a form of ‘ambivalence’ reinforced by dissenting positions on the level of institutional and editorial politics. Since the publication of his translation of *Traumdeutung*, Brill suspected that Freud was dissatisfied with his translations. After the outbreak of the First World War, which made correspondence between Vienna and New York increasingly difficult, and soon brought it to a complete standstill,

30. Letter from A.A. Brill in English to S. Freud, 27 October 1914, SFP.

31. See the various instances in English, Latin and Italian added by Freud (1960[1905]) to the second chapter devoted to the technique of jokes, all taken from Brill (1911).

Freud tried to dispel this suspicion by confirming Brill's status as his exclusive translator, at least for his monographs or collections of articles.³²

Nevertheless, Brill lost his privileged role shortly after the end of the war. In connection with Ernest Jones's founding of a psychoanalytical publishing house in London, a team consisting exclusively of British psychoanalysts was formed in 1919. From then on, this team was to provide the English translations of Freud's writings, culminating in the later Standard Edition published by James Strachey (Forrester & Cameron, 2016, pp. 591–612). The very same year, Freud announced to Brill that his daughter Anna would produce raw versions for the future translations to be sent to London for revision.³³ The English office of the International Psycho-Analytical Press took up the fight against any translation activity that had not been reviewed by its committee, especially in the United States. The first model, according to which the act of translation meant reinventing psychoanalysis in another language and culture, thus increasingly gave way to a different model aimed at controlling and standardizing a genuinely Freudian terminology and providing a definitive version of the text.

It is significant that the first US translation project that met with severe criticism was the fruit of an initiative by Freud's nephew Edmund Bernays, who had obtained from his uncle the authorization to act as his literary agent. At his behest, a group of students from Columbia University produced a translation of the *Introductory Lectures* which was published anonymously in 1920, with an introduction by G. Stanley Hall, under the title *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (Freud, 1920[1916–17]). This book, which ran into 12 editions within just two years and sold very well, provoked the ire of Jones, who wrote to Freud that it was 'full of vulgar Americanisms':

<EXT>You are made to speak in a very unworthy style, so that the reader must get an unfavorable impression of your personality. The translator does not seem to be an analyst, for he makes such mistakes as using 'suppression' for 'Verdrängung' in spite of our efforts to make 'repression' a technical term distinguished from suppression. </EXT>

32. Letter from S. Freud to the American Medical Association, 12 December 1915, SFP.

33. Letter in German from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 5 October 1919, SFP.

<T>Not without sarcasm, he added that the translation was possibly better than Brill's, since it was devoid of 'any performances quite equal to his famous rendering of *hallucinatorische Besetzung* as "hallucinatory occupation"'".³⁴

In 1922, the International Psycho-Analytical Press began to counter the American translations by publishing the first translations of Freud's last theoretical works (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1921), while an 'Informal Glossary Committee', consisting, besides Jones, of Alix and James Strachey, Joan Rivière, John Rickman and others, laid down the new rules to be followed in order to ensure a coherent and uniform technical vocabulary (Jones, 1924).³⁵ Creating an English style 'worthy' of Freud's personality was a matter on which Jones would relentlessly insist in their correspondence:

<EXT>A knowledge of good English is almost unbelievably rare here, and of course rarer still in America. Last week, for instance, I had the occasion to read for the first time Brill's translation of your Leonardo, and I was deeply shocked time and again to see punctuation as illiterate as that of a servant's girl, with expressions of a similar order. Men of sensitive feeling, taste and education like Rickman and Strachey rightly shudder at such things.³⁶</EXT>

<NP>With Jones and an intellectual elite whose members had studied mainly in Cambridge, taking control over future editions and translations, Freud's investments, in both emotional and economic terms, shifted increasingly towards England. Since the *Verlag*, and the Press as its English equivalent, were expensive enterprises, it was necessary to finance them with donations from professionals and

34. Letter from E. Jones to S. Freud, 9 July 1920 (Freud & Jones, 1993, p. 385).

35. It should be stressed that Jones's glossary had a much longer history, going through an initial phase of discussions between Freud, Brill and Jones in the years 1908–9. Its first elements were published in 1913 in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse* by Jones and Maeder (listing respectively the English and French terms), and in the following year by Brill in an appendix to one of his books (Brill, 1914). It then becomes evident that Jones took over a number of Brill's English translations of technical terms (*abreaction*, *transference*, *repression*, *displacement*), while rejecting others (*foreconscious* for 'vorbewusst' would now give way to *preconscious*). This tendency continued in the glossary Jones added to the second edition of his *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (Jones, 1918) where Brill's translation of 'Besetzung' (*occupation*) was replaced by *cathexis*, one of the most controversial terms of Strachey's later Standard Edition.

36. Letter from Jones to Freud, 15 December 1921 (Freud & Jones, 1993, p. 448). For Brill's translation of Freud's Leonardo-Essay, see Freud (1916b).

sponsors (Marinelli, 2009[1999]). After Brill had been stripped of his exclusive status as Freud's English translator by the new monopoly of the Psychoanalytic Press, he was asked to contribute to its financing.³⁷ When communication between Freud and Brill resumed after his first post-war visit to Vienna in 1921, Freud did not forget to note the 'ambivalence' prevailing on both sides. In the following years, his first American disciple would stay away from psychoanalytic congresses and even take a stand against Freud and other psychoanalysts on the Continent in the sharp controversy over lay analysis. The latter repeatedly chided him as a 'naughty boy' who had been perverted by American society, while at the same time assuring him of his unchanged affection.³⁸ Freud would strongly disapprove of Brill's modification of the psychoanalytic setting, especially the shortening of the analytic session to 35 minutes, noting that he had 'abandoned the analytical in favour of the American standpoint'.³⁹

In 1928, after a visit by Brill to Berchtesgaden, where Freud and his family spent their vacations, the latter summed up the relationship with his translator: 'You know I have always been fond of you and at the same time nagging at you, a peculiar form of emotional transference.'⁴⁰ For the last time, then, he called on Brill to translate the eighth and final edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, to be published in 1930. In his foreword to this new English version which indicated that it was 'completely revised' (Freud, 1932), he stressed that 'if psychoanalysis now plays a role in American intellectual life, or if it does so in the future, a large part of this result will have to be attributed to this and other activities of Dr. Brill's' (Freud, 1953[1900], p. xxxii). This unconditional praise was followed by the remark that 'this book, with the new contribution to psychology which surprised the world when it was published (1900), remains essentially unaltered': 'It contains, even according to my present-day judgement, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime'. (p. xxxii) For Freud, the original insights of his self-analysis and the book's status as a 'historic document' (p. xxxi), as the preface of the eighth German edition from 1930 put it,

37. If Jones's Press came to an end in 1923, this was not only due to financial problems, but also to institutional conflicts between the Viennese and British psychoanalysts. Freud decided to stop the Press to save the *Verlag*. See Marinelli (2009[1999], pp. 154–76).

38. Letter in English from S Freud to A.A. Brill, 7 January 1923, SFP

39. Letter in German from S Freud to A.A. Brill, 20 September 1927, SFP.

40. Letter in English from S Freud to A.A. Brill, 8 October 1928, SFP .

were not in contradiction with the multiple alterations the book had seen in the past three decades, including the ones made by his preferred translator. This attempt to reaffirm a momentous discovery by one single author stood, however, in sharp contrast with a textual practice of translation which once more intervened heavily in the text of all its previous versions without indicating the changes. Accordingly, in this new version the boundaries between original and translation are blurred to an extent that makes it impossible for the reader to know whether it is Freud who cites examples taken from Brill, or whether the latter just elaborates further on his own material.

The final episode of Freud's relationship with his first American translator is in many ways emblematic. In December 1938, after his arrival in exile in London, Freud received a cheque from Brill, who had retired from all institutional functions two years earlier, and learned to his great surprise that his disciple had reworked all his translations for the thousand-page volume *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* published by Random House.⁴¹ Freud doubted that he was entitled to the money and frowned upon the fact that the publisher had not even cared to send him a copy: 'As the author, I do have a right to it.'⁴² Brill's introduction to this volume, composed for a general audience, provided an apt response to this desperate plea of an author superseded by his translator:

<EXT>Psychoanalysis was unknown in this country until I introduced it in 1908. Ever since then, I have been translating, lecturing and writing on this subject both for physicians and laymen [. . .]. The psychoanalytic terminology, some of which I was the first to coin into English expressions, can now be found in all standard English dictionaries. Words like *abreaction*, *transference*, *repression*, *displacement*, *unconscious*, which I introduced as Freudian concepts, have been adopted and are used to give new meanings, new values to our knowledge of normal and abnormal behavior. (Brill, 1938, p. 3)</EXT>

41. Brill claimed that he had 'practically retranslated all of the works'. Letter from A.A. Brill to S. Freud, 15 December 1938 (wrongly dated 1934), SFP.

42. Letter in German from S. Freud to A.A. Brill, 4 December 1938, SFP.

<NP>One should note that Brill rightly insisted on his formative role in establishing Freud's central terms in English,⁴³ a role that was in threat to be forgotten in view of the further terminological standardization work of the British group led by Jones. However, the self-apologetic tone with which Brill celebrated his own contribution to the rise of psychoanalysis in American culture tended to obscure the reality of the collective parallel translation processes through which psychoanalysis entered the Anglo-American world. And then, Brill presented to the public a highly personal canon that limited Freud's *opus* primarily to six works that he himself had translated: *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*, *Totem and Taboo* and *The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*.⁴⁴ The fact that this canon did not include the later theoretical revisions of the theory of the neuroses and the drive theory, as Freud deplored, did not pose a problem for his translator. According to Brill, these later meta-psychological works were possibly of interest to the 'psychoanalytic therapist', but not to the general public, whose interest lay elsewhere: slips, dreams, jokes and sex.

<A>IV

<T>In 1953, the Hogarth Press started the publication of *The Standard Edition of Sigmund Freud's Complete Psychological Works* with James Strachey's new translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In his preface, Strachey justified the heavy apparatus of footnotes and commentaries accompanying his two-volume edition by the fact that the book is

43. See footnote 35, above.

44. These are the original titles of Brill's translations (with only one exception, namely the *Drei Abhandlungen* whose original title had been *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* [Freud, 1910] modified after the second edition of 1916). One has to note that besides his first complete English translation of *Studies on Hysteria* (Breuer & Freud, 1936[1895]), Brill also omitted a number of shorter pieces from this collection, among them Freud (1909, 1916b, 1918b). Not all the translations were republished integrally: In the case of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, most of Chapter 1 was cut and replaced by a summary of five pages. In the editor's introduction, one finds a number of doubtful assertions such as that it was during his first meeting with Freud in 1908 that both men agreed on the sequence in which Brill was to translate his works into English and that he then „voluntarily gave up the task“ after World War I (Brill in Freud, 1938, 27). He also remains largely silent on the role of Jones who is characterized as his „ardent collaborator and friend“ (ibid., 28) and on the further translation work of the British group.

<EXT>one of the major classics of scientific literature and that the time has come to treat it as such. It is the editor's hope and belief that actually the references, and particularly the cross-references to other parts of the work itself, will make it easier for serious students to follow the intricacies of the material. Readers in search of mere entertainment – if there are any such – must steel themselves to disregard these parentheses. (Strachey in Freud, 1953[1900], p. xxi)</EXT>

<T>To a large extent, these editorial choices resulted from the decision to confront the various 'verbal difficulties' of Freud's own dream examples and interpretations in a form that was radically opposed to the model employed in previous translations. According to Strachey's view, there were three methods of dealing with the problem of untranslatable passages:

<EXT>The translator can omit the dream entirely, or he can replace it by another parallel dream, whether derived from his own experience or fabricated *ad hoc*. These two methods have been the ones adopted in the main in the earlier translations of the book. But there are serious objections to them. We must once more remember that we are dealing with a scientific classic. What we want to hear about are the examples chosen by Freud – not by someone else. Accordingly the present translator has adopted the pedantic and tiresome third alternative of keeping the original German pun and laboriously explaining it in a square bracket or footnote. Any amusement that might be got out of it completely evaporates in the process. But that, unfortunately, is a sacrifice that has to be made. (ibid., p. xxii)</EXT>

<NP>Although no mention was made of Brill at all, it is obvious that his translations were the sole target of Strachey's criticisms. The complete rejection of the initial model of translation, widespread among the first generation of disciples and legitimized by Freud himself, was now justified in terms of scientific seriousness and the classical status the text had acquired. The message was clear: future readers should approach psychoanalysis as a serious business, not as a matter of entertainment. Enshrined by Strachey's laborious and pedantic commentary and further mystified by Jones's biography as a momentous and unrepeatable event, Freud's self-analysis

could not provide a model, since it was now consigned to belong to the remote past of the unruly origins of psychoanalysis. The translational model adopted by the Standard Edition would enforce such a reorientation. This becomes evident in Strachey's final words on his edition, published in the 'General Preface' (1966), where he stated that he had translated according to the 'imaginary model' of the 'writings of some English man of science of wide education born in the middle of the nineteenth century. And I should like, in an explanatory and no patriotic spirit, to emphasize the word "English"' (Strachey, 1966, p. xix). This model of imagining an English equivalent of Freud in his own time, however, could in his view not be extended to the realms of the two areas which were affected by the vexed issue of untranslatables. Accordingly, Strachey conceded that in the realm of terminology he had resorted to neologisms 'which cannot with the best will in the world be regarded as "English"' (p. xix). And with regard to dreams, jokes and puns, he reaffirmed that the 'easy alternatives are denied us of making a cut or substituting some equivalent English material. We must fall back on square brackets and footnotes, for we are bound to follow the fundamental rule: Freud, the whole of Freud, and nothing but Freud' (p. xix).

The editorial success of the Standard Edition and the widespread assumption that Strachey's model of translation embodied more rigorous standards, both in terms of a philological treatment of the text and of competent psychoanalytic commentary, has ultimately led to the universal discrediting of Brill's first English translations of Freud's major works.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to underestimate Strachey's own honest acknowledgement that his new translation could make no claim to being a historical-critical edition of the original text, a deficiency largely due to the 'absence of any really trustworthy German edition' (p. xvii), not remedied until today. And given that the Standard Edition had been the work of a 'few individuals usually engaged in other occupations', with no relevant academic background, he would even candidly admit that it had to be considered 'in many ways an amateur production' (p. xviii).

Despite these caveats, Strachey's edition and translation has itself been attacked ever since it appeared, not always with very sound arguments, such as in the assertion that Greek and Latin neologisms such as 'cathexis' are alien to the deeply

45. In his biography of Freud, Peter Gay calls Brill's translations 'casual and at times fearfully inaccurate', offering the English-speaking world not more than a somewhat uncertain 'glimpse' of Freud's theories (Gay, 1989, p. 465).

humanistic nature of psychoanalysis (Bettelheim, 1982; Ornston, 1985). In contrast to approaches which cling to the received view that all existing and future translations must remain faithful to some essential core or ultimate meaning of the text, historical-philological studies of psychoanalytic texts must instead take the inevitably ‘pedestrian’ route of engaging in closer detail with a variety of opposed and even incompatible models of translating and editing which were conceived in response to the historical model first formulated by Freud himself. This initial model bears the stamp of a principle stressed in the *Introductory Lectures*, namely that one cannot learn psychoanalysis by conventional pedagogical means such as lectures, demonstrations or manuals, but only ‘on oneself, by studying one’s own personality’ (Freud, 1963[1915/16], p. 19). The Freudian texts, then, should not be approached as monuments, but as vehicles asking readers to perform acts of translation which may turn out to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’, according to the rules prevailing in the respective model. And if many of these translations also speak of a fundamental ambivalence towards the text, it is not in the sense of a universally valid characteristic of the modern translator, but rather in the more mundane sense of the self-understanding of those actors who inhabit a world shaped and transformed by the concepts introduced by Freud and his followers.

<A>V

<T>The early psychoanalytic model of translation raises a number of questions that need to be further pursued. What are the lessons to be drawn from a historical study of translations that are considered ‘bad’ or at least deeply flawed? An important one, that should be of interest to scholars and analysts alike, is to reveal historical dimensions of the theory and practice of psychoanalysis which appear nowadays as exotic or odd, not least because they have become invisible through the later efforts to turn Freud into a canonical author endowed with a consistent terminology throughout his entire career, an effect that has been reinforced, in the wake of Strachey’s uniform translational approach, by similar choices adopted by the new French translation of the *Œuvres Complètes*.

On another level, the case of the early English translations can serve as a starting point to reframe the question of the dissemination of psychoanalysis on a global scale. Whereas it has long been taken for granted that the process by which Freud’s theories and techniques became driving forces within Western societies

throughout the twentieth century was crucially linked to the cultural hegemony of the United States, case studies of translating psychoanalysis within other parts of the world offer a quite different and more nuanced picture.⁴⁶ A comparative approach of cases will need to specify the various models and practices of translation put to use in order to study how and to what extent authors, translators and readers are entangled in relational and institutional bonds. The figure of the ‘ambivalent translator’, as it emerged initially in the context of a model destined to become normative, is only one of many possible articulations of such processes of global transmission.

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46. See especially the challenges posed by the work of El Shakry (2017), which I cannot discuss in this context.

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ABSTRACT

<T>An influential strand within modern translation studies has drawn a portrait of the translator as a deeply ambivalent figure, charged with the challenging task of preserving the foreign of the original work within the new version, and thus as inevitably torn between two languages and cultures. The case of the first English translations of Freud's work, undertaken by Abraham Arden Brill, is used here to demonstrate that a detailed historical and philological analysis of textual practices can help us situate the figure of the ambivalent translator in its proper context, namely within a historical model of translation. Retracing this model and its ramifications also has larger implications for an approach that should allow us to understand the relational, affective and institutional bonds connecting authors, translators and readers in global processes of cultural transmission of the human sciences.

<K>*Keywords:* translation studies, A.A. Brill, James Strachey, ambivalence, self-analysis