

Under Erasure: A Queer-Feminist Psychoanalytic Reading of a Dream¹

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<https://doi.org/10.51897/interalia/SVXU3304>

abstract

This article offers a queer-feminist psychoanalytic reading of a dream based on transcription, translation, and transliteration, three interrelated operations referring to the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, as proposed by French psychoanalyst Jean Allouch (n.d.). The storyline of the dream drives from the long-lasting violence against LGBTIQ+ people, and brings into practice new, creative forms of critical knowledge production in academia. One question remains concerning the rather latent desire and how to continue opening the way for it through free association as the texture of writing as such. The ability to write beyond the storyline in a non-directional way, and to listen with all our senses, as discussed in reference to Trinh (2011), are key to deciphering the unconscious and bringing it into play in academic writing and queering psychoanalysis.

keywords

under erasure, queer-feminist psychoanalysis, dream, transcription-translation-transliteration, the unconscious in academic writing

1. Dreaming of the Utopian

At an academic conference a gay trans man asked the moderator to announce their *deseo*:² to rename the auditorium as a site under erasure.

The history of science had erased diversity: genders, sexualities, and sexual characteristics, especially those of trans* and intersex people.

The speaker wanted it to become a permanent reminder; and without knowing what else their wish would evoke, on waking up, it already appeared to be written under erasure, *an der Tür*.

This dream causes certain astonishment. Since the beginnings of psychoanalytic theory, and according to Sigmund Freud's *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1935: 116), it is supposed "[t]hat dreams are brought about by a wish and that the content of the dream expresses this wish [...]. [T]he dream does not merely give expression to a thought, but represents this wish as fulfilled, in the form of an

hallucinatory experience.”³ At first glance, the wish in this dream appears to be the renaming of an auditorium “under ~~erasure~~.” The visual representation of the erasure itself becomes, paradoxically, a permanent reminder: the reminder that the academy is responsible for the erased history of trans* and intersex people. No less astonishing is that the desire *Anliegen* is announced through the enunciation of another wish, or desire: the speaker's desire to be presented to the audience through, and with, their *deseo*. Instead of making themselves known through a bio-note of their achievements, they put their desire in the spotlight, a desire born of a lack: the self-critical acknowledgement of the academy in its brutality of systematically and categorically erasing people with dissident sexualities, genders, and variations of sexual characteristics to supposed hetero-cisgender-endosex-normativities. As a commemorative reminder, in turn, it is addressed to subsequent generations of students, urging them to take responsibility and turn the memory of our traces, still present ~~under erasure~~, into a living legacy.⁴

Upon waking up with this dream material, I was not about to interpret the manifest and latent wishes or even ask about the wish-fulfilments of this dream. Rather, I was so surprised by the term under erasure, that I wondered where this expression that I did not remember reading came from. Searching the internet, I quickly realised that the French post-structuralist philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), had used it in his philosophical writings. Drawing on Heideggerian thought, Derrida referred to the practice of writing under erasure, to problematise the limits of language. According to this reading, it is not so much a matter of eradicating words, but of problematising them in their ambiguity, both in their presence and in their absence; that is, it is recognised that a word under erasure is still present, even if it is not the most precise one, but there is no other better option, to refer to that what one wants to express.⁵ The British philosopher and literary critic, Christopher Norris (1982: 69, italics in the original), explains it as follows:

The marks of erasure acknowledge both the *inadequacy* of the terms employed – their highly provisional status – and the fact that thought simply cannot manage without them in the work of deconstruction. By this graphic means, much akin to the anomalous spelling of *differance*, concepts are perpetually shaken and dislodged.

Unlike Western logocentrism, which is based on binary, oppositional and hierarchical-exclusionary thinking, in this type of writing, difference is no longer constructed as antagonism or opposition, but as a relation of difference that consists more of a deferred or postponed juxtaposition (Schramm, 2013: 64).⁶ These pillars of poststructuralist thought are not limited to Derrida, nor to abstract, theoretical spheres. The poet and art critic Raphael Rubinstein (2018) situates Derrida's contributions within a broader emerging movement that, from the 1960s onwards, employed the practice of erasure. It spread globally among

artists and writers, along with a growing critique of hegemonic discourses that transgressed literary, artistic, political, and social boundaries.⁷ With this in mind, it can be summarised in line with Rubinstein (2018) that, for Derrida, “[a]ll writing is under erasure [...] because the condition of erasure, of not being there, is built into writing, which is always a matter of absence, of trace.”

Now, how is it possible that I unconsciously resorted to Derrida’s contribution, without having read anything by him for many years? Did the dream have the purpose of bringing to the fore a desire? In search of possible answers, I propose to start by analysing the most obvious: In the dream, the manifest wish was that of the speaker, who wanted the academy to take responsibility for the epistemic violence exercised throughout the history of knowledge production against trans* and intersex people. The gay trans man wished for our erased histories to be commemorated and kept alive, making space for what has not yet taken place, or is no longer taking place. Dreaming of the utopian, literally that no-place, became linked to the enunciation of the desire that sought to pass the erased history to another site; to a place of remembrance that, between “under erasure” and “sous rature” in the end made me wake up with an image labelled *an der Tür*.⁸

The violent erasure of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans*, inter*, queer, asexual, and other people (LGBTIQA+), and our knowledges became a permanent reminder, symbolised through the image of a sign on the entrance door of a university auditorium. In the following, I invite the reader to take a closer look at this conversion. Based on French psychologist and psychoanalyst Jean Allouch’s book *Letra por letra* (n.d.), I initially discuss it in terms of its processes of transcription, translation, and transliteration.⁹ Then, I interweave the discussion with the question of how to open up the unconscious further, focusing on listening and writing as central pillars of this conversion. What becomes crucial for my argumentation throughout the whole present work is that the shift from the speaker’s perspective to a witnessing I/eye,¹⁰ as well as the shift from listening to reading and writing, not only bring to the fore a wish seeking its fulfilment, but also highlight different aspects of the unconscious, with the elusiveness of desire as a central concern of psychoanalytic theory.

The fact that I refer to Allouch (1939-2023) is not only because his work was the main reading of a research colloquium that I attended in the Academic Master Programme in Psychoanalytic Theory (UCR) from March to July 2024; it also coincides with the fact that during his lifetime, Allouch adopted a (self-)critical stance towards psychoanalysis and its history of excluding and silencing LGBTIQA+ people and our knowledges. It is worth highlighting Allouch’s openness to gay, lesbian, trans, or queer studies, even shortly before his death, recognising and recalling their relevance as an emerging field in and for

contemporary psychoanalysis. In the Allouch's obituary written by German physician and psychoanalyst Michael Meyer zum Wischen (2023), "[t]his critical questioning of psychoanalysis itself, a kind of permanent perlaboration of its bases and terms, was Allouch's strength."¹¹

2. The (De)ciphered Dream

"The dream is a *Bilderschrift*, a writing by images"
(Allouch, n.d.: 72, italics in the original)¹²

What does this image-writing consist of and how can it be read and understood? Allouch argues that transcription, translation, and transliteration are central tools that facilitate the reading of a dream. To better understand his argument, I elaborate below a brief characterisation of these three concepts in relation to the dream.

First, it should be noted that transcription refers to phonetic writing. In relation to the dream, it means, for example, converting the sound of verbal language, of the speaker's desire enunciated to the moderator, into a writing that takes the form of a label with the words *under erasure*. Another transcription occurs in the moment of writing down the dream after waking up, and later when placing it at the beginning of this article. In the dream, I was listening and watching closely as the speaker expressed *su deseo*, their desire, to the moderator. I was at the same panel, on their right side, which suggests that I, too, was a speaker, although I was irrelevant in this staging of the other's desire. From this dream perspective, my place of enunciation was one that allowed me to bear witness to what I had observed to my left, and my first transcription of the dream can be interpreted as such.

We could further ask ourselves how to transcribe the affective languages, the movements, and other aspects that accompanied the dreamt events or that arose upon awakening. The astonishment, with which I awoke from the dream, and with which I now refer to it, can certainly be an indicator of how to follow this question. Then, the movement from the first dream scene to the second reveals a significant shift from the auditory experience inside the auditorium to a visual representation outside it. Referring to the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2012: 53, italics in the original), it is worth noting that the "*acoustic intimacy*" in the first dream scene fades to a spacing in the second. Now I no longer hear the enunciation of the desire, but rather see its materialisation, as I look at the commemorative sign at the entrance door of the auditorium. This differentiated observation of acoustic and visual spaces, developed by Pallasmaa (2012: 53) in his book *The Eyes of the Skin: Architectures and the Senses*, allows us to problematise

how modern thought, here in Western architecture, prioritises sight at the expense of the other senses, such as hearing:

Sight isolates, whereas sound incorporates; vision is directional, whereas sound is omni-directional. The sense of sight implies exteriority, but sound creates an experience of interiority. I regard an object, but sound approaches me; the eye reaches, but the ear receives.

I will return below to the importance of receptivity for listening and argue for cultivating it also through the other senses. For now, it is worth summarising that, although I woke up with a visual representation in my mind, I did not see it in its potential dominance over the auditory, but rather in its function of revaluing the interior space of the auditorium for the oral transmission of knowledge and its questioning. According to the storyline of the dream, the commemorative sign was to refine the listening of erased stories and to promote a critical, creative understanding of scientific academic scholarship. This desire was addressed both to the faculty and to the student body, including future generations.

Finally, I began the interpretation of the dream from this first transcription as a testimony. By focusing on the shift from the first auditory scene to a second visual one, I focused on some of the sensory dynamics of the dream and, following Pallasmaa, I wondered about their importance for the transcription. Precisely, the comparative characterisation between hearing and sight helped to problematise the structural limitations of transcription. The transcription of audible worlds, dreamt or not, into one linearly embodied in a written text, implies a conversion of spatial experience and understanding that can only *come close* to its sensory richness.¹³ That is, the dream transcription, like any other, will always be limited in its representational function. It should be remembered that this is also due to the limitations of writing itself. It is not possible to reconstruct or represent the dream ‘in its entirety,’ as if to create a copy of a supposed original. Because of this impossibility, in Allouch’s (n.d.: 19) words, we can conclude that transcription results as a “real operation [...]”¹⁴

Secondly, we can characterise translation in terms of its function of giving meaning, and state that this meaning is wrongly, but commonly, assumed to be literal between one language and another. I will not go into problematising this assumption here. Those who move between different languages, or work in translation, know its limitations, whether because of its potential for betrayal (Belausteguigoitia, n.d.), because of its misunderstandings and cultural ambiguities (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2006), or because of having to deal with the countless untranslatabilities between languages (Rato, 2014).¹⁵ What should be emphasised is that, rather than being a question of words from different

languages, it is the different modes of communication and codes that make translation difficult or impossible, even within the same language. Whereas, “translation” in turn “shows up as such a comprehensive exercise that perhaps we practice it all the time without knowing it” (Bercovich, 2023: 1).¹⁶

These factors become especially relevant when we address them in multilingual contexts and from a queer perspective. According to Antke A. Engel and Anna T. (2023: 4), authors of “The Multilingual Issue: Untranslatability, linguistic multitudes, embodied speech,” and editorial team of the *InterAlia* special issue by the same name, it is worth considering that:

normative heterosexuality and rigid sex gender binaries foreclose articulations and depictions of queerness, differing from the “deviant” or “perverse” or the “normalized” other. Thus, from a queer perspective languages and modes of communication are needed to allow one to switch codes or mix codes in order to be able to express oneself. This allows queers to enter into encounters and exchanges, form relationships, and organize communally or planetarily. Moreover, what these multilingual elements do is apply critique to the/an oppressor.

Significantly, there are languages that shift or move between codes, and criticise binary, hetero-cis-normative structures. On the one hand, this observation highlights the need to shed pathologising or normalising imaginaries about queer people; on the other, the ability to translate, switch or move between the codes is existential.¹⁷ If this existential ability was further thought of not as an expression of a free will or an intentional, conscious agency, but in terms of desire as the underlying force of why queer people move between the codes or relate to each other, what might then eventually become necessary, would be a reconsideration of the possibility to analyse different operations of the term desire. Given Engel’s and T.’s emphasis on queer(ing) languages and modes of communication, and linking their argument to Leo Bersani’s (2010: 105) critique of how psychoanalysis has theorised desire in history, desire should not thus be thought only as a lack in being, but also “as the confirmation of a community of being.”¹⁸

The limitations and impossibilities of translation extend to deciphering dreams in their individual grammars and translating them from one (preconscious) language to another (conscious).¹⁹ In the case of my dream, the signifier under ~~erasure~~ referred to the erased histories and epistemicide of LGBTIQ+ people. That was the supposedly unique meaning with which I woke up. I had not yet realised the ambiguities, nor the other possible readings, such as, for example, wondering about code-switching and code-movements as an existential question. I had not yet thought about the extent to which my dream would be followed by a more intensive examination of violence in psychoanalysis; nor had I become

aware of other voices that would ask internationally about the possibilities of “refram[ing] the question of the violence of processes of translation within psychoanalysis, [...], especially when it is dealing with subjects and conditions perceived as deviant or marginal” (Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin, 2024).²⁰ Their discussion would be held later.

It is worth asking whether one of the reasons why translation processes become violent is to be found in reduced or non-existent listening. Later, I will return to this aspect in relation to an eventual reduced understanding of the voice, in which its translation function is understood in the common sense indicated above, as a supposedly transparent and unequivocal medium in the transmission of information, or of communication.

Having dreamt “under erasure” in English, I did not translate it into another language until later, when I searched for the expression on the Internet. Then I saw that in Spanish the translation *bajo el borrado* was used and in French *sous rature*. That is, within the dream, I did not yet know the French translation. This became significant only later, when I took up the dream again and began to ask myself how to analyse it through transliteration.

Transliteration, thirdly, and according to Allouch (n.d.: 19f), refers to the writing of the letter, “from one script [...] to another [...]”.²¹ It includes the change between one alphabet and another; or it can refer to an alteration within the same language, with the effect that it generates a double meaning, or turns out to say something else.²² In my dream I identify a transliteration by homophony, but not within a single language, but between a combination of three: English, French and German, which I first discussed through a fourth, Spanish. The dream, and my subsequent reaction to it, makes it possible to concretise what Allouch proposes, when he explains transliteration as the central axis of a writing clinic, of a psychoanalysis that understands itself as reading: “Transliteration intervenes in reading by linking the writing to what is written” (16);²³ a “second degree”²⁴ writing is created (17), with the aim of contributing to the deciphering of the unconscious.

In letting myself be carried away by the English-French translation of under erasure and *sous rature*, the possibility of a transliteration into German, composed of *under* and *ture*, or better written *an der Tür*, opened up for me. I find it very striking how the a posteriori (re)constructed homophony emphasises the desire enunciated as the central content of the dream; that is, that the academy shall be self-critical about the erasure of LGBTIQ+ people and our knowledges from the history of science, and that it shall permanently remind us of this through a label of “under erasure” on the door of an auditorium.

It should be critically noted that the exercise did not initially lead me to a new interpretation. Already in the dream, the sign with the name under ~~erasure~~ was to take place next to the entrance door of the auditorium, not so much *on* the door (“*an der Tür*”), as the transliteration implies. If I woke up with the image of the sign next to the door, it was not because I had dreamt it unconsciously in a mixture of English, French, and German, but because I had heard the enunciation of the desire to rename the auditorium. Since then, the dream led me to imagine that there was going to be a sign at the entrance to the auditorium and, moving from the first scene of the dream to the second, I anticipated this visualisation, finding myself, upon waking up, at the entrance to the already renamed auditorium.

Despite the objections, the symbolic importance of the sign, which consists of remembering the past and rewriting history by renaming the auditorium, should be emphasised. According to the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek (2008: 59), this process of symbolisation can be specified as follows: “The past exists as it is included, as it enters (into) the synchronic net of the signifier – that is, as it is symbolized in the texture of historical memory – and that is why we are all the time ‘rewriting history’ [...]”

The dream scene is also significant, in that it symbolises, as Žižek (2008: 58) would observe, a “rupture” in the academic tradition, which “restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way.” Dream analysis can also be conceived in itself “as a symbolization, a symbolic integration of [seemingly] meaningless imaginary traces” (57) of the unconscious, whose (non)sense made me, in a first reaction, waking up with astonishment.

In summary, the dream, and my reaction to it have served as an example *par excellence*, both to understand that transcription, translation, and transliteration are articulated as a whole, and to introduce their application as analytical tools for deciphering a dream. The characterisation of transcription, translation, and transliteration as different ways of approaching the unconscious has shown how they are linked to each other. Allouch (n.d.: 78) argues that, being a “writing of sound, meaning, and letter”²⁵ respectively, transcription, translation, and transliteration “form a ternary”²⁶ that encompasses the spheres of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. Here the author refers to French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who had originally elaborated these categories for a psychoanalytic theorisation of the psychic apparatus.²⁷ Without going into more detail, it should be noted that the triple dimension of a dream, or any other manifestation of the unconscious, puts into perspective the need to think of a psychoanalytic reading that is constructed, according to Allouch (n.d.: 17), in and from “the various possible modes of articulation of these three operations.”²⁸

This multidimensionality reveals a certain structure, which cannot be deepened at this time. For now, it is worth remembering that the dream is “a *Bilderschrift*,” “a writing by the image,”²⁹ but in which the images are not to be interpreted as if they existed as such (Allouch, n.d.: 72, italics in the original). Therefore, the dream can also be considered as “a figurative writing,”³⁰ whose manifest contents require a reading and must be put in relation to more latent ones (Freud quoted by Derrida, 1989: 28).³¹ The analytic work of continuing to open the way to the unconscious remains to be done. Desire has barely made its appearance.

3. To Continue Opening the Way – Writing from the Intersection of the Interior and the Exterior

“In trying to relate the dream and to write it down,
we tend to focus on the storyline,
thereby threatening the dream
to disappear quickly into illegibility.”
(Trinh, 2011: 108)

The way we remember our dreams is, according to Vietnamese-US American feminist filmmaker, artist, and cultural theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha (2011: 108), due to “the pervasive need of ours to track the words for fear of going off the rails of access and communication.” Departing from this observation, made in her essay “White Spring”, Trinh proposes that we open ourselves with all our senses and decenter our attention.³² Whether in the analysis of a dream, an (auto)biographical work or other events, instead of narrating the storyline chronologically, backing it up with “external retrievable facts” (109), the author advocates an analysis that goes beyond the informative load of words and their communicative purpose. The fact that something does not make sense, that we do not understand it, “does not necessarily hinder understanding” (Trinh, 2011: 81). Instead of focusing on the interpretation of what is said in terms of its possible meaning, Trinh argues in her essay “Voice Over I” for paying more attention to the timbre and tone of the voice, its rhythm, and breathing. The voice, in this sense, is not a medium that merely reproduces what it refers to: “It works as a sound seer whose rhythms translate less the realities evoked than the internal life of its own constitutive elements” (81).

It seems pertinent to me to note that Trinh’s research-analytical practice is aesthetic, polylogical and polyphonic, and that in which approaches are linked, without becoming instruments of appropriation or domination. On the contrary, it favors the becoming of the narrative from non-direction, as Trinh (2011: 98) explains in her essay “Mother’s Talk.” Based on Trinh’s proposal to continue to opening the floor to the unconscious from non-direction, I am interested in the following questions: How then to continue writing? How to write in a way that

allows us to recognise free association as the royal road to that making way? How to listen and read? It is certainly a challenge, if not a paradox, to oscillate between the need to generate intelligible, even communicative, writing and to let oneself be carried away by a non-directional free association that constitutes the very texture of this article. Writing in this way requires time and an acceptance of uncertainty and openness, factors that do not necessarily correspond with the neoliberal logics of academic production in a ~~hurry~~ career. The architecture of knowledge construction under the given institutional and urban conditions is often not oriented towards the inclusion of the student body with their diverse interests and needs, nor does it promote all the creative potential that could unfold from them.

So, what other purpose does the writing of words have, if not the communication of their contents? Trinh shows the value it has when we detach ourselves from the desire to understand and keep openness. Through a very fine language, the author unfolds her analytical work, both artistic and theoretical, personal, and cultural. Her transcription of auditory experiences, her translation between different languages and cultures, and her transliteration of words, syllables, and letters, open a range of the multiple possibilities of how to read and interpret a work. Her own voice tunes in with those of Asian artists or French feminist psychoanalysts, and invites us to get closer not only to her thinking and feeling, but also to the imaginary, sensorial, sensual, silent, and mute worlds, to ~~our~~ other-selves. If from science and other discursive fields our histories were eradicated, or are (again) under erasure and threat, how do their present absences in each of our movements continue? Which daytime residues of our dreams or nightmares are in any case remembered and listened to with empathy? Instead of writing the plot of a story or a dream, according to Trinh, it is worth imbricating the dream writings and listen (to them) with all our senses.³³

Trinh (2011: 77) approaches spaces in-between, opting for places of enunciation that are often fading and ephemeral, but no less committed; relational, liminal, transitory places, in which the voice sounds and resonates in, and through, the body, "from the inside out, between absence and presence, desire." How about, if we return for a moment to the auditorium's front door, now not only as an image that already represents an exterior space and with which my dream ended, but as that in-between, passable space, one that connects the interior, audible, with the exterior, written; an open space that links a verbally enunciated wish of renaming an auditorium with its visible configuration through a sign? The reminder of LGBTIQ+ histories under erasure, *sous rature*, is now *an der Tür*. Finally, the door as such could also be read as an open floor toward the desire to be recognised by others in one's own desire.³⁴ Why not connecting to each other through our desires?³⁵

If we recall the importance of transliteration (Allouch, n.d.), and symbolisation (Žižek, 2008), in the analysis of the unconscious, we can now take the discussion a step further and, following Trinh (2011: 59f), examine more closely the final letter r in *under erasure*, *rature* and the *Tür*. While it is “[p]erceptible to the ear and yet hardly articulated, the r [...] is always half muted, half pronounced.” Its “pronunciation remains in parentheses [...] – that is, somewhere between a sound and a silence.”³⁶

Trinh (2011: 60) focuses here not so much on the pauses and interruptions between words, but within them, by emphasising the interaction and divergence between meaning and sound. In this way, a potentially liberating space is unfolded in which other possible readings can emerge, which are not predetermined by the weight of certain words or their sounds. The desire to rename the auditorium, more than just containing certain information and clear communication, is manifesting itself in its complexity. The analysis of the r in *under erasure*, *rature* and at the *Tür*, makes it easier to recognise that the process of symbolisation is inscribed in this fragility of language, in this potential for transliteration between letter and letter. The voice appears here not so much in its function of translating, but of transliterating, of (re)signifying that which emerges to consciousness.

Trinh’s call to be receptive to the unexpected connections and new perspectives that may emerge from the unconscious is noteworthy.³⁷ It is in receptivity that we can tune into our inner worlds, and outer environments, and develop “the ability to see things in their own right” (Marcuse quoted by Trinh, 2011: 56). Unlike the contrast that Pallasmaa critically made between hearing and sight when specifying his understanding of acoustic intimacy, Trinh rather emphasises in “An Acoustic Journey” the importance of the receptivity of both senses at the same time and of “develop[ing] the ability to receive with more than one’s eyes or ears [...]” (56).³⁸

I find it striking what Trinh writes about listening: that in Asian cultures listening means receiving a word not only with the ear, but also with the mind and heart. I understand this to mean that receptive, active listening exceeds words and encompasses what we think and feel; it is an indivisible listening that extends inwards and towards the unconscious. It is also a way of listening to the rhythms, “the melodies of the dancing body and...” opening myself to desire, to the sensual (Schramm 1998).³⁹ “[A]ll are music”, Trinh (2011: 55) would reaffirm and emphasise the capacities acquired by living in movement, in the spaces in-between, in transformation: “The more displacements one has gone through, the more music one can listen to” (55). Perhaps then, with this in mind, we can fine-

tune our listening and hear how music, which runs “both outside and within us, defines all activities of life” (56).

“[H]ow can we engage the desire that has come once again to address us? [...] How should we speak and write?” asks also New York based psychoanalyst and literary scholar Emma Lieber (2024: 4). For Lieber, psychoanalysis is of great value in deciphering the symptoms of time. In a “hystericized” contemporary culture (3), as Lieber calls the present with increasing, if not abysmal social gaps and growing polarisations, the author calls for not becoming indifferent to the lives of others. As an analyst, she disagrees with the assumption of maintaining a neutral, apparently distant posture, and focuses on the analytical commitment based on desire and transference. The individualised transferential dynamic is also recognised in its broader social and cultural development. Lieber questions the (supposed) clear separation between analyst and analysand, between the subjectivity of one person and another, or between the interior and the exterior. Like Trinh, and with reference to Freud and Lacan, Lieber (2024: 6) assumes that “we are always located at the juncture of inside and outside.”

Lieber concretises this position by describing the unconscious with a Moebius strip, which is characterised by a crossing of the interior and the exterior, without both spheres constituting an oppositional division. With this figurative description she characterises the structure of the subject, as previously elaborated by Lacan.⁴⁰ Lacan refers to the Moebius strip as an inverted eight, to explain the structure of the subject as an unconscious subject that is constituted by repetition;⁴¹ that is, “the subject is the effect of this repetition” (Lacan, 1970).⁴² From there we can conclude that it is the structuring repetition, and the infinite movements between the conscious and the unconscious, between our own and others’, that constitute us as subjects.

Writing, in its processes of transcription, translation and transliteration, but also listening, the (in)audible, and all the other senses, are central in opening the way to the unconscious at that crossroads of the interior and exterior. Based on Trinh (2011), I argued that receptivity is a key in listening, when you want to approach the multisensory world, tune in to it and transcribe it in its richness, even knowing that this is never completely achieved. Likewise, writing this article from indirection, based on free association, benefits from a high degree of receptivity and openness. It is not to be denied that the exercise is somehow paradoxical, if one wishes to comply with the evaluative criteria of a course or peer reviewed academic journal. It is perhaps precisely this tension that brings to the fore the challenge of writing the article in a context that is inevitably part of the hegemonic power relations in the academy, although the discussed psychoanalytic, philosophical, literary, and artistic currents question the

modern, humanist legacy of Western science. Reading my dream, with reference to Allouch and other authors reminds me of what Derrida (1989: 5) had already critically pointed out at another time: that “psychoanalysis cannot be understood well within the logocentric closure,” from within the logic of modern Western thought.⁴³ In my understanding, Derrida alludes to other forms of thought, based on other codes of reasoning, that are not (necessarily all) based on the pillars of Western thought.

What remains to be explored the possible intersections between psychoanalytic, transfeminist, and queer theories, to continue analysing the dream based on these other currents of thought, oscillating between codes beyond androcentric, hetero-cis-normative, academic structures. Among writers who have already critically intervened in these entangled fields are, for instance, Belgian psychoanalyst and philosopher, Fabrice Bourlez (2018) in *Queer psychanalyse. Clinique mineure et déconstructions du genre*,⁴⁴ the Philadelphia- and New York-based psychoanalysts Patricia Gherovici and Manya Steinkoler (2023) in their edited book *Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Sexualities. From Feminism to Trans**, as well as Costa Rican clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, Laura Chacón Echeverría (2022) in “Anotaciones iniciales para una clínica trans,”⁴⁵ presented at the international colloquium *Guerre et paix: une rencontre possible entre psychanalyse et queer?* in Bandol, France.⁴⁶ But rather than delving deeper into these discursive intersections, it turned out that this article has, so far, brought to the fore the value of a non-directional approach and a commitment to desire in its unconscious dimensions both individually, socially and politically. These central aspects, among others, served to discuss how the sensory world is part of the plot of the dream and challenges its transcription. What is heard and how are we listened to? Can we speak? Although the acceptance of not-knowing, of uncertainties and ambiguities, curious travel along paths that seem errant, or openness to possible answers to questions that have not even been posed yet are common experiences in research, here, in dream analysis and its writing, they take a central place.

Such resources are now part of the methodological baggage in this associative journey through the dream, loaded with a wish and desire: to eliminate violence in the history of science against LGBTIQ⁺ people, and to put a sign on the door of an auditorium that symbolises a change in the patterns of how we produce knowledge in future and remember our respective pasts. To what *other* desire could my dream have referred? Is it time for the answers to emerge?⁴⁷ True, the desire was barely revisited... what indeed has been brought to the fore is a trans*feminist contribution to psychoanalysis; a queer-feminist creative reading of the unconscious, a reading that is not ought to remain only a dream. Meanwhile, I once again reread Trinh (2011: 109f), who reminds that the quality of listening precedes

the responses: “Although they may come one by one to one’s limited ear, they show up and take leave by the thousands when the whole of a body listens to life and death.”

notes

- 1 The first version of this article was written in Spanish between April and July 2024 in the Academic Master Programme in Psychoanalytic Theory at University of Costa Rica, before an English translation was submitted to *InterAlia: A Journal of Queer Studies*. Many thanks to the editorial board for editing and publishing the article in both languages, and to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their observations. Special thanks to Laura Chacón Echeverría and Antke A. Engel for their valuable recommendations. All translations from German, Spanish, or French to English are done by the author with the additional support of DeepL Translate, and the editorial’s final revision. The translation and style of chapter 1 has been carefully reviewed by Laura Scott Rosales, which is much appreciated. I am also very grateful to Dominika Ferens’ and Tomasz Basiuk’s meticulous reviews. The original quotations are stated in the endnotes.
- 2 The Spanish term *deseo* translates to wish or desire in English; here it can also be read as matter of concern or proposal, or as *Anliegen* in German.
- 3 Many thanks to Laura Chacón Echeverría for recommending this book to me, which gave me a deeper insight into Freud’s (1935) interpretation of dreams as wish-fulfilments (190-203). By quoting an early translation of Freud here, *deseo* refers to *Wunsch* in German, and wish in English. However, I would like to point out that I use the term *deseo* rather in the sense of desire. According to Jean Laplanche’s and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis’ (1996: 96f) argumentation in the Spanish edition of their dictionary of psychoanalysis, *Diccionario de Psicoanálisis*, “the word *deseo* does not correspond exactly to the German term *Wunsch* or the English term *wish*. [la palabra *deseo* no corresponde exactamente al término alemán *Wunsch* o al término inglés *wish*].” Both authors associate *deseo* rather with the German terms *Begierde* or *Lust*, words that nowadays are replaced by the German term *Begehren*, that corresponds more to desire in English, or *désir* in French. (See also endnote 4).
- 4 I use the word desire on purpose, even though at a first glance one might identify the speaker’s announcement as a wish or a demand. In this work, I do not problematise the relation between demand and wish/desire, nor between wish and desire. This would require writing a further article. I rather bring into play their blurring boundaries, also because I first wrote this article in Spanish, and the Spanish language does not distinguish between desire and wish, both of which translates to *deseo*. See also Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (1973: 482) quoted by Teresa de Lauretis (1994: 32), who discuss Jacques Lacan’s rereading of the Freudian notion of desire. More precisely, and as we can learn from *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies. Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, by Barbara Cassin (2004: 295), the French notion of desire, *désir*, is one of the translations obtained from the Freudian *Wunsch*, in German. However, Lacan’s *désir* is not the same as Freud’s *Wunsch*, in its sense of *Wunscherfüllung*, or wish-fulfilment. (Nor is *Wunsch* the only expression, Freud uses; indeed, he used a rich vocabulary to address wish and desire). Lacan’s use of desire, *désir*, rather points to a structural lack in being and can be traced to Hegel’s term *Begierde* (Abensour in Cassin, 2004: 1412ff.; Nemitz, 2014). According to contemporary German editions of Lacan, it translates to *Begehren*, which has also to do with a changing usage of the word over time: Whereas in Hegel’s (1770-1831) life time, “*Begierde* was used more than twice as often as *Begehren*,

today it is the other way around" (Nemitz, 2014, in quotation marks in the original, not in italics). Here, I use *deseo*, *désir*, or desire, in terms of *Begehren*. This is also motivated by the relevance this term has – despite its multiple connotations – for both psychoanalytic and queer theoretical approaches. Finally, this emphasis certainly does not exclude other possible readings of the dream.

- 5 See "Sous rature" (2024).
- 6 Departing from this poststructuralist perspective, in Schramm (2013), I conducted a transdisciplinary queer feminist ethnographic and ethno-psychoanalytic study of Afro-descendent and Indigenous Bribri women's subjectivities and social imaginaries in Costa Rica, rooted both in their experiences and in Afro-diasporic and Indigenous Thought, contributing to Black Queer Studies and Queer Indigenous Studies, among others.
- 7 I thank Laura Chacón for her recommendation of this interesting essay by Rubinstein (2018), that refers to an exhibition of the same name.
- 8 For those who are unfamiliar with English, French, or German, it is worth specifying that the pronunciation of the English preposition under, and the French suffix [...]*ture* (*rature*, erased), is practically the same as *an der Tür* (at the door in German).
- 9 The book was originally published in French in 1984.
- 10 The reference of I/eye is taken from Trinh T. Minh-ha (2011: 92).
- 11 "Diese kritische Befragung der Psychoanalyse selbst, eine Art permanenter Durcharbeitung ihrer Grundlagen und Begriffe, war Allouchs Stärke."
- 12 "El sueño es una Bilderschrift, una escritura por imágenes."
- 13 This limitation has been pointed out also by filmmaker and feminist cultural theorist Trinh T Minh-ha (2011), to whom I refer when discussing her thoughts on receptivity and indirection as keys in writing, listening, and speaking to the other. See also Secession (2001).
- 14 "operación real."
- 15 I thank Laura Chacón for referring me to *Diccionario de intraducibles*, originally published in French by philosopher Barbara Cassin (2004), who compiled untranslatable expressions of fifteen European languages.
- 16 Susana Bercovich, Argentinan psychoanalyst based in Mexico, writes: "Desde una perspectiva amplia, la traducción se presenta como un ejercicio tan abarcador que acaso lo practicamos todo el tiempo sin saberlo." The author offers an excellent reflection of translation in psychoanalysis and its theorising. For further articles on translation, see *The European Journal of Psychoanalysis*' first edition in Spanish, following the given reference.
- 17 Regarding this existential dimension of being able to move through, and break with the codes, I recommend listening to the song "The Code", performed by non-binary Swiss singer, Nemo, in the Eurovision Song Contest, 2024.
- 18 US-American literary critic and queer theorist Leo Bersani (1931-2022) (2010: 104), does not refer specifically to the mobility of queer people, but to "human subjects" in general. By reconceptualising desire, the author distances himself from the psychoanalytic construction of desire "as the mistaken reaction to a loss," and criticises psychoanalysis' inability to think desire in the above quoted terms (105).
- 19 See Jacques Derrida (1989: 15), who argues that, starting with Freud, the interpretation of dreams becomes the reading and deciphering of a "secret writing

[escritura secreta].” I share Derrida’s critical assessment of this method as weak, because it alludes to a supposed “permanent code [código permanente].” According to Derrida, dreams are untranslatable for two main reasons: first, because it is impossible to translate an entire “verbal body [cuerpo verbal],” a translation, in this light, would involve “[d]ropping [it] [[d]ejar[lo] caer,” and if reinstituted, it would be “poetry [poesía]” (19). Second, translation (as well as transcription), fails in the process of making the content of a dream conscious, if it is intended to take the content of the dream from its preconscious state to another language (consciousness) “without damage [sin daño],” as if that content was an archive that would not be altered further (19).

- 20 The quotation is originally a question: “And, is it possible to reframe the question of the violence of processes of translation within psychoanalysis, which many critics see as being structurally anchored in the asymmetric setting of its practice, especially when it is dealing with subjects and conditions perceived as deviant or marginal?” (Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin, 2024) It is the last of several main questions in the announcement of the conference *Psychoanalysis in translation. A global conversation*, organised by the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin, Germany (2-3 May 2024).
- 21 “de una escritura [...] a otra [...].”
- 22 See also Sigmund Freud’s (1907) essay and self-analysis about “Das Vergessen von Eigennamen” [“Forgetting proper names”], in which he analyses a transliteration not regarding a dream, but as an effect of repressing unwanted thoughts.
- 23 “La transliteración interviene en la lectura al enlazar el escrito a lo escrito [...].”
- 24 “de segundo grado.”
- 25 “escritura del sonido, del sentido, y de la letra”
- 26 “forman un ternario.”
- 27 In 1953 Lacan first introduced the triad, also known under its acronym R.S.I., and continued developing it until his death in 1981. At the Rome Congress of Romance Language Psychoanalysts, on 26 September 1953, Lacan explained the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in his public talk “Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse” [“The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis”]. This so-called Rome Discourse became a turning point in psychoanalysis, for Lacan fostered the analyst’s work with the subject’s speech. For more details in English and the Rome paper in its French version, see *No Subject* (2011). For a discussion on the relationship between the three registers in French, see in French the version by M. Chollet of the seminar “R.S.I.” given by Lacan (1974) 10 Dec. 1974. Thanks to Andrés Vargas Abellán for this reference in French. For its discussion in German, see Lacan expert, Rolf Nemitz (2016). Nemitz also offers links to an audio recording, several transcriptions, and translations of seminar 22, held between 1974 and 1975, in which Jacques Lacan, explained the different understandings he made of the R.S.I. (See also Lacan, 1974-1975).
- 28 “los diversos modos posibles de articulación de estas tres operaciones.”
- 29 “una Bilderschrift,” “una escritura por la imagen” (72, italics in the original).
- 30 “una escritura figurativa”
- 31 According to Sigmund Freud’s *Die Traumdeutung* (2012: 207), published in 1914, the latent dream thoughts determine the manifest dream content. Their relationship, therefore, needs to be examined, as well as the ways the latent dream thoughts turn

into manifest contents. For more details, see Freud's sixth chapter on dream work. In this article I do not detail the underlying latent dream thoughts; however, during the writing process I have been aware of them and I appreciate the comment of one of the anonymous reviewers who suggests that "the question of the connection between *unconscious desire* and one's own and others' censorship could be discussed even more precisely" (italics in the original).

- 32 All of Trinh's essays referred to in this article can be found in Trinh (2011).
- 33 This kind of listening with all our senses might find its philosophical equivalent in the Latin term *sensus communis*, referring to the ability of employing all senses, instead of prioritising only sight, as in Western culture (McLuhan and Powers, 2002: 51). According to Japanese literary critic, Tanehisa Otabe (2015: 74), *sensus communis* here does not mean to use all senses at the same time; as it transverses our bodies it rather "regulates [...] our entire perception." ["Auf diese Weise regelt m. E. der 'sensus communis' unser gesamtes Wahrnehmungsvermögen"].
- 34 The free association with the desire for recognition of one's own desire by others emerged when reading Nemitz (2015b) and his analysis of the desire of the Other and the desire of the subject.
- 35 This question arises in the context of a longer ongoing self-reflexive and queer-feminist psychoanalytic theorizing I do on listening, affective languages, and desire in recent years, with theoretical approaches also from cultural-philosophical perspectives and the arts (Schramm, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c).
- 36 In her essay "Nature's r. A Musical Swoon" Trinh analyses the r in the word nature, but refers also to French words, such as *rature*. On account of this closeness with the pronunciation of the words dealt with here (erasure, *rature*, *Tür*), Trinh's contribution seems to support my argumentation.
- 37 In her essay based on the speech "Detroit. Incarcerated and Disappeared in the Land of the Free", Trinh (2011: 125) refers to the ability to transform in similar words.
- 38 Significantly, both Pallasmaa and Trinh have done creative work that is articulated from all the senses and (in relation to) Asian and African cultures.
- 39 "tanzende [...] Körpermelodien und..."
- 40 See Jacques Lacan's (1970) lecture, given in Baltimore in 1966, "Of Structure as the Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever." See also Rolf Nemitz's (2015a) commentary in German regarding Lacan's talk. For a critical discussion of Lacan's references to the Möbius strip and other topological objects, as well as to mathematical logic, see Alan Sokal's and Jean Bricmont's second chapter on Jacques Lacan (1999: 18-37). Both physicists contend that from a mathematical point of view, Lacan's "psychoanalytic topology" (18) and their analogies "are unsupported by any argument" (24); Lacan's uses of mathematical concepts remain largely unexplained, arbitrary, confusing, or superficial. The authors conclude that "Lacan's 'mathematics' are so bizarre that they cannot play a fruitful role in any serious psychological analysis" (36). Finally, Sokal and Bricmont suggest calling Lacan's writings "a 'secular mysticism'" (37), which seems to me an interesting perspective, as it might be put into dialogue with Jacques Derrida's critical comments on understanding psychoanalysis only within the Western episteme.
- 41 This does not consist of repeating 'the same thing,' but in a mark that structures the subject in a certain way, in that repetition (Lacan, 1970).
- 42 When wondering what "topological objects have to do with the structure of mental disease" (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999: 19), one might keep in mind that Lacan

problematizes the founding structure of the subject as such. The Möbius strip and other topological objects are figures by which the subject is approached in its constitutive and varying aspects. The relationship between topology and structure is certainly made by Lacan in his lecture. However, according to Sokal and Bricmont (1999), their equivalence remains unclear. They argue that the psychic structure of the subject may not depend solely on topology, and structure itself should be defined more precisely, too (fn20).

- 43 “el psicoanálisis no se deja comprender bien dentro de la clausura logocéntrica”
- 44 I thank Laura Chacón for recommending this book to me.
- 45 “Initial annotations for a trans clinic.” Thanks to Laura Chacón for sharing her unpublished talk with me.
- 46 See also François Morel (2022), who problematizes the context of this colloquium, for instance its organisation, which became affected by the polarisations between different psychoanalytic associations or groups. Morel highlights the need of a profound revision of heteropatriarchal, cis-normative conceptualisations with which psychoanalysis has traditionally operated. The colloquium is certainly part of recent initiatives around the world that stand for a major opening of psychoanalysis toward queer and trans*feminist theories, and other currents of critical thought, acknowledging them as an emergent field for psychoanalytic theorisations and clinical practice based on open listening, free from discrimination and violence.
- 47 Elaborating on desire might become a follow-up article. Here I would like to summarise that I do not only draw on desire as “a method to make explicit my motivations and interests [...]” (Schramm, 2024c: 31), but also problematise the desire’s inherent unfixability in language (Lummerding, 2009: 214; see also Schramm, 2024a: 6).

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