

Psychoanalysis and cinema: application of film analysis for learning the concept of the unconscious

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Abstract: Based on the academic observation of the importance of teaching-transmitting psychoanalysis at the university, this article aims to show how much the learning of the psychoanalytic concept – unconscious – can be facilitated through the cinematographic language. For such purpose, theoretical research and psychoanalytic film analysis were chosen as research methods, these guided by applied psychoanalysis. Films consecrated by the media are used, ranging from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* to Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* to set in motion the psychoanalytical conceptualization that organizes the concept of the unconscious in Freud and Lacan. It is observed, therefore, that the Freudian novelty consisted of uncoupling the unconscious from consciousness and elevating it to the status of a psychiatric instance that is expressed through dreams, flawed acts, jokes and others. From this conception, Lacan later proposes the unconscious structured as a language providing the fundamental thread of social ties.

Keywords: teaching-transmission, Freud, Lacan, psychoanalytic theory, cinematographic vignettes.

Introduction

This investigation has as its background the following question: how to enhance the teaching-transmission of psychoanalytic concepts in the university, especially in Psychology under-graduation? Such questioning brings to light a discussion that permeates the history of psychoanalysis since its beginning, namely: is it possible to teach psychoanalysis in universities? A question that Freud (1919[1918]/1996) seeks to answer in his text “On the Teaching of Psycho-analysis in Universities,” an article written to address the reforms in medical education that, based on the inclusion of psychoanalysis in the curriculum of the medical course in Budapest caused quite a stir. On this occasion, the master from Vienna commented on the theme to present several necessary conditions for teaching and transmission of psychoanalysis at the university.

Earlier, however, in “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis,” he clarifies that the difficulty regarding psychoanalytic teaching outside specific institutes is not due to an intellectual issue. On the contrary, it is an affective difficulty since “where sympathy is lacking, understanding will not come very easily” (Freud, 1917/1996, p. 145). In this way, the Viennese physician

clarifies that an affective disposition is required for those who propose to engage in psychoanalytic bonds. As psychoanalysis goes beyond descriptive psychopathology, it “engages in careful and laborious investigations, devises hypotheses and scientific constructions” (Freud, 1919[1918]/1996, p. 150). They “would certainly contribute greatly towards forging a closer link, in the sense of an *universitas literarum*, between medical science and the branches of learning which lie within the sphere of philosophy and the arts” (p. 187). From the articulation between these fields of knowledge, “University stands only to gain by the inclusion in its curriculum of the teaching of psycho-analysis” (p. 187).

In this line of reasoning, the Freudian considerations on the teaching-transmission of psychoanalysis in the university allow us two relevant extracts. The first concerns the uniqueness needed to deal with psychoanalysis in a higher education institution, since awareness of the distinction between teaching (learning *about* psychoanalysis) and transmission (learning *from* psychoanalysis) is required. While the first works with a cognitive disposition that points to the universality of theory, the second needs an affective disposition. It demands the inclusion of the uniqueness existing in the human drama and its modes of psychic suffering.

Thus, the difficulty would lie in appropriating the universalization of concepts, but without disregarding

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the particulars of each case. For this reason, the master from Vienna proposes an essential tripod for the teaching-transmission of psychoanalysis at the university: apprehension of psychoanalytic concepts, personal analysis, and supervised practical experience that, strictly speaking, would enable the development of *clinical listening* that, consequently, leads to the efficient practice of psychoanalytic knowledge.

The second extraction of Freud's sayings (1919[1918]/1996) highlights the importance of using other forms of knowledge, such as philosophy and the arts, in academic training. At that time, while the Viennese physician spoke specifically about training in Medicine, the same can be said about Psychology, since it is a course that transits between the areas of humanities and health, which consequently requires the student an expanded view of culture as stated by Chaves, Bittar, and Gebrim (2015).

Thinking about the importance of the arts in the training of psychologists, Pedro and Pessoa (2015) highlight that this approach produces new perceptions in the subject about himself, the other, and the world, as it enables re-elaboration of thoughts, knowledge, and feelings. In addition to allowing the apprehension of central elements governing the internalization of culture, a movement facilitating the education of sensitivity to what is proper to the human. In Psychology, it becomes fundamental since psychologists work directly with the subject and his complexity. Thus, "they need to mediate relationships at all times, build spaces for learning, manage emotions, understand the other, that is, they need to have a broad repertoire on the different aspects of life and the unpredictability of the human" (p. 5).

This broad repertoire constitutes what, in psychoanalysis, can be called a symbolic resource. By symbolic, it is understood as "a system of representation based on language, that is, on signs and meanings that determine the subject in his absence" (Roudinesco & Plon, 1998c, p. 714). As soon as he is born, the individual is inserted in a symbolic world, i.e., in a language world. This standpoint states that "the function of the symbol is to order the way a culture works and influence the individual's behavior by organizing his [social] relationships" (Françóia, 2007, p. 94).

In this context, the arts emerge as an illustrative example of a universe marked by the symbolic. Among the various forms of art, cinema appears as one of the productions of modernity, which Lou Andreas-Salomé, a great psychoanalyst friend of Freud, in 1913, named the "Cinderella of the arts" (Rivera, 2011, p. 10). She suggested "that the speed of the succession of images allowed by the cinematographic technique would more or less correspond to our faculties of representation" (p. 10). This finding led her to question "about what the future of cinema could come to mean for our psychic constitution" (p. 10).

Suppose we can say that the emergence of this art is recent, dating back to 1895, like psychoanalysis

itself. In that case, the approximation between these two expressions of culture is even more current, precisely in 1926, when director Georg Pabst began recording the film *Secrets of a Soul*, whose initial aim was to popularize psychoanalysis. Freud, however, was opposed to this idea, justifying that a reliable presentation of analysis was not possible. However, he accepted the proposal, and the film was based on a case attended by Sachs, a member of the International Psychoanalytical Association (Rezende & Weinmann, 2014).

Subsequently, many psychoanalytic scholars and psychoanalysts developed works showing the importance of using cinema to broaden and understand the psychoanalytic theory. Among these, we mention Sérgio Telles, who, since 2004, publishes a collection entitled *O Psicanalista Vai ao Cinema*, which is now in its third volume; Christian Dunker and Ana Lucília Rodrigues, who published, as of 2013, the *Cinema e Psicanálise* collection, which is now in its eighth volume. Also, numerous university departments have research and extension centers in psychoanalysis and cinema, such as the Research and Extension Center in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Nuppine) at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

From this standpoint, Weinmann (2017) asserts that these surveys can be schematically grouped into the following trends:

- 1) essays on the comprehension of work in light of the author's biography;
- 2) psychopathological diagnosis of characters;
- 3) readings of the film text to detect its unconscious message; and
- 4) analogies between the language of cinema and specific psychic processes, such as dreams. In such approaches, we are in the domain of applied psychoanalysis, i.e., psychoanalytic theory operates as a transcendent knowledge. It lights up cinema, but it doesn't reinvent itself with it. (p. 6)

It is in the perspective of the fourth trend that we guide this investigation. It aims to demonstrate how the learning of the psychoanalytic concept – unconscious – can be facilitated through cinematographic language to the point where it is possible to adopt films as a pedagogical resource to facilitate the teaching-transmission process of psychoanalysis at the university, especially in Psychology courses.

Method

The method was based on the theoretical investigation with a focus on Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's contributions to the conceptual study, without ignoring commentators such as Slavoj Žižek and Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, and on the psychoanalytic film analysis of a previous selection of feature films able to illustrate some nuances of the psychoanalytic theoretical framework of the concept of the unconscious.

In the context of Freudian and Lacanian discourses, theoretical bibliographical research was used, which, for Lima and Mioto (2007), “implies an ordered set of procedures to search for solutions, attentive to the object of study, and which, therefore, it cannot be random” (p. 38). Meanwhile, from a cinematographic standpoint, we use psychoanalytic film analysis that aims to “listen to the proliferation [of the Other’s discourse] in the plots of cinematographic language” (Weinmann, 2017, p. 8). However, it is noteworthy that:

Psychoanalytic film analysis does not consist of a method but of a singular methodological reflection. . . . It stems from the author’s yearning, firmly rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition, to take the productions of culture – more precisely, its subjectifying effects – as what makes a counterpoint to the clinic, i.e., what allows us to think, from another angle, about the problems that it puts it on. In this sense, cinema is understood as a possible alterity to psychoanalysis, this otherness that encourages conceptual invention. To operate with the difference incarnated by cinematographic language, psychoanalytic film analysis takes some aspects of film studies as privileged interlocutors, especially cinema semiotics, proposed by Christian Metz, and film analysis, as inaugurated by Raymond Bellour. (Weinmann, 2017, p. 9)

Therefore, this research was guided by applied psychoanalysis, a methodology inaugurated by Freud as “application of psychoanalysis” and named by Mezan (1985) as “applied psychoanalysis,” since the psychoanalytic method was applied outside the traditional clinical context, i.e., the psychoanalytic method in scientific and academic research involving another area of knowledge.

The procedures performed in the investigative path can be described as follows: a concept-theme (unconscious) was worked on, associating it with film-themes, i.e., a concept was chosen for its fundamental value and, from this concept, auxiliary concepts were derived, which have been studied via psychoanalytic texts and dictionaries. From this study, a conceptual constellation was organized for which the films served as a clinical-thematic example. This was followed by the dynamic writing of a historical psychoanalytic study of the concept of the unconscious through cinematographic vignettes.

The following texts by Freud were assessed to highlight the concept of the unconscious: “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis” (1917/1996), “Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses” (1893/1996), “Studies on Hysteria” (1893-1995/1996), “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900/1996, 1900-1901/1996), “Conference XI – The Oneiric Elaboration” (1916/1996), “Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious” (1905/1996), “The Unconscious” (1915), “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), and “The Ego

and Id”¹ (1923). From Lacan, the following were used: “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis” (1953/1998), “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud” (1957/1998), and *The Seminar, Book 5: The Formations of the Unconscious* (1957-1958/1999).

Such texts were associated with the following films: *Dreams* (Kurosawa, 1990), *Alice in Wonderland* (Burton, 2010), *Inception* (Nolan, 2010), *The Name of the Rose* (Annaud, 1986), *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), *The Girl on the Train* (Taylor, 2016), *Quest for Fire* (Annaud, 1981), *10,000 BC* (Emmerich, 2008), and *Cast Away* (Zemeckis, 2000).

The following auxiliary concepts were also used: hysteria, hypnosis, symptom, Other, dream, neurotic, child sexual trauma, fantasy, psychic apparatus, preconscious, conscious, flawed act, joke, first and second topic, masochism, sadism, Ego, Id, and Superego, psychic conflicts, formations of the unconscious, significant, real, symbolic, imaginary.

Results and discussion

As this is a theoretical investigation, the results and discussion were based on the dynamic writing of a historical psychoanalytic study of the concept of the unconscious through cinematographic vignettes. We started, therefore, with a brief presentation of the concept before Freud, to clarify that it is not an invention of the master from Vienna. Subsequently, the evolution of the concept in Freud and Lacan was discussed to show that the development of concepts in the psychic plot is highly complex and often – if not always –, challenging to work in isolation. It is precisely the intertwining of such concepts that constitute the notion of psychic apparatus or subject of the unconscious. The fundamental notion that, especially in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, a conceptual evolution requires a precise location of the theoretical moment to which it belongs. Thus, Freudian and Lacanian texts do not lose the strength of the novelty that express.

In the early days of the construction of the concept of the unconscious

When remounting the construction of the unconscious concept, there is an essential caveat about its origin. Unlike what many believe and disseminate, this concept was not forged by Freud. This term was already used long before the foundation of psychoanalysis. In the philosophical context, for example, thinkers such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) were already working with this concept. Also, in the psychological context, Gustav Fechner and Wilhelm Wundt, in the early days of experimental psychology,

1 In *The Standard Edition*, the translation is *The Ego and Id*. However, we opted for using Ego, Id, and Superego in this text.

emphasized: “the dark side of the human soul [seeking] to bring out the tenebrous face of a psyche immersed in the depths of being” (Roudinesco & Plon, 1998a, p. 375), as their investigations pointed out that there was more to the human psyche than consciousness. However, with Freud (1915/1996), the unconscious becomes an independent instance of consciousness, which can be revealed through dreams, lapses, flawed acts, and other formations. This is precisely the Freudian novelty.

Thus, unlike the philosophical and psychological theories that existed until then, Freud (1915/1996) proposes a reading based on his clinical findings. From this standpoint, the unconscious becomes a conjecture capable of explaining a vast aspect of clinical phenomenology. In these terms, the Viennese physician points out that “the psychic act is unconscious and belongs to the *Ics* system” (p. 178), i.e., it is about recognizing, in the unconscious, an explanatory hypothesis, and it is in this sense that many give the Freud the discovery of the unconscious. As stated by Garcia-Roza (2009), “almost all psychoanalytic theorists would agree with this statement, although not all agree on the meaning, extent, and limits of what they understand by unconscious” (p. 168). Thus, our enterprise of trying to answer what is the unconscious proves not to be an easy task, an idea reinforced by Jorge (2008) when assuring that the “question about *what the unconscious is* was continuously supported by Lacan . . . as an enigma that requires decipherment” (p. 9, emphasis added).

This is because, as Freud (1917/1996) himself states, the discovery of the unconscious inflicts the “third blow on man’s self-love” (p. 151). The first of them would refer to the *cosmological blow* arising from the discovery of Copernicus, which removed the Earth from the center of the universe. The second blow would correspond to the *biological blow* and arises from Darwin’s perception that man is not superior to other animals, which means that he is not at the center of creation. Finally, he called the third one the *psychological blow* and decentered the man from himself.

In this way, it is evident, in line with Garcia-Roza (2009), that “whatever the notion of the unconscious developed before Freud, the fact is that it did not designate anything important or decisive for the understanding of subjectivity” (p. 170). Therefore, our investigation of the conceptual path of the unconscious will focus on developments that begin with Freud and are later taken up by Lacan.

The unconscious in light of cinematographic language

Freud’s contact with hysteric women allowed him to observe that the type of symptom they presented did not indicate any physiological dysfunction. He hypothesized that a specific affective charge directly affected the representation of the organ or function that seemed ill. This meant that, for example, a patient with

a paralyzed arm would have “her movements released as soon as this amount of affect [was] eliminated” (Freud, 1893/1996, p. 214).

It is in this context that the first sketches of a theory of unconscious psychic processes emerge. However, it is in “The Interpretation of Dreams” Freud (1900/1996) begins to elaborate on the theory that will unfold in a new field of knowledge and will receive the name of psychoanalysis. From this standpoint, the master from Vienna shows that, through dreams, it was possible to access the unconscious since the dream is made up of images that can only be expressed through language. The report of dreams, therefore, made their interpretation possible. From this perspective, Santiago (2017) proposes that it is possible to “represent the unconscious as an interpretable apparatus.”

Thus, the importance of studying dreams lies in the fact that Freud (1915/1996) presents them as one of the possible manifestations of the unconscious. In this wake of thought, three films stand out that offer some interesting insights into Freud’s formulations of dreams and how they work: *Dreams*, by director Akira Kurosawa (1990), *Alice in Wonderland*, by Tim Burton (2010), based on the homonymous work by Lewis Carroll, and *Inception*, by Christopher Nolan (2010).

The first film – *Dreams* – consists of a Japanese production that presents a sequence of eight dreams, some of which even portray Kurosawa’s childhood. These scenes seem even more realistic when the director clarifies that the film materializes some dreams that persisted throughout his life. Without dwelling on any specific dream, how the images are superimposed in each oneiric segment, practically devoid of words, calls our attention. As formulated by Freud (1900/1996), this allows us to show that meanings of dreams are only elaborated *a posteriori*, similar to what we do throughout the film. As a difference, in the interpretation of a dream, only the dreamer can tell of his dream.

Alice in Wonderland, the second feature, tells the story of an intelligent and observant girl who felt out of place in the context in which she lived. Faced with the request for her hand in marriage, she spots and sets off to chase a white rabbit that takes her to a magical world in which all events turn out to be different from what she knew until then. We are interested here in establishing an analogy between film scenes and what Freud (1900/1996) called the manifest and latent content of dreams that, “due to censorship, manifests itself through disguises, allusions, and symbolisms . . . so that, when brought to the dreamer’s consciousness, it does not cause the excessive repulsion and discomfort that would occur if the unconscious material were fully accessed” (Maliska & Tavares, 2012, p. 8).

Thus, from the clinical device, it is understood that the manifest content would correspond to the dream report made by the dreamer himself. In contrast, the latent content would consist of the elements that need to be debugged, deciphered, as they are found in the unconscious, distorted by the censorship. In this way,

bizarre scenes and grotesque situations are justified, especially in Wonderland, since it can be thought of as what the founder of psychoanalysis claims to be “different from the scene of representational waking life” (Freud, 1900/1996, p. 566). In that regard,

if we make a series of comparisons between oneiric thoughts and the manifest dreams that replace them, we will find all sorts of things for which we are unprepared; for example, that the nonsense and absurdity of dreams have their meaning. (Freud, 1916/1996, p. 178)

Inception, in turn, presents the story of Cobb, an expert in breaking into and stealing secrets that are in people’s unconscious, especially during sleep, when the mind is most vulnerable. The narrative revolves around the invasion of a man’s mind to implant a memory in him. This operation has five characters and the protagonist, each acting on a dream level, trying to convince the victim to go deeper into his psyche. From this perspective, the five dream levels proposed in the feature film allow us an analogy with Freud’s (1900/1996) theoretical formulation of a topical representation of the psychic apparatus², to understand the functioning of the first Freudian (1900-1920) topic. This model has three instances: unconscious (Ics), preconscious (Pcs), and conscious (Cs). Also, two systems: unconscious and preconscious/conscious, oriented in the progressive-regressive direction. It means they move from the unconscious to the preconscious and then to the conscious.

For Freud (1900/1996), the main characteristic of this topic is to give meaning to the invested energy so that it becomes mobile and can be discharged. This energy is divided into the two systems mentioned above. However, while the unconscious system struggles to be free of this energy, as its accumulation causes displeasure, the other two systems seek to inhibit this discharge, imposing restrictions on the first system and setting the psychic apparatus in motion when seeking to repeat the first experience of satisfaction.

Other exciting vignettes in the film help to understand the contents inhabiting the unconscious, which, in Freudian theory, correspond to repressed representations. In the film, Cobb has repressed representations arising from his guilt for his wife’s death. These memories constantly invade his dreams in an attempt to redeem his guilt. Thus, from the oneiric experiences of the protagonist and the theoretical framework of the founder of psychoanalysis, it is clear that dreams, in addition to being the realization of unconscious desires, also work as a way to maintain the psychic balance, not allowing repressed representations to come to the conscious.

Later, Freud (1905/1996) wrote “Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious,” a text that supports the unconscious based on its language structure. For Roudinesco and Plon (1998b), “after *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* was Freud’s third major work dedicated to the elaboration of a new theory of the unconscious” (p. 112). This is because the master from Vienna showed that the logic of the unconscious is not only present in dreams, as he initially stated in “*The Interpretation of Dreams*,” but also in everyday life with flawed acts and jokes. Thus, Freud (1905/1996) found that, in many cases, laughter was presented as an effect of what escaped consciousness.

This issue of laughter is illustrated, in an exciting way, in the film *The Name of the Rose*, by director Jean-Jacques Annaud (1986), based on the homonymous novel by author Umberto Eco. The film tells the story of a Benedictine monastery in the year 1327, in northern Italy, which had a vast library of labyrinthine construction so that while it hinted at the truth of the knowledge it contained, it hid it. Through this game of show/hide, truth/lie, hidden/evident, the feature film’s plot unfolds, which revolves around some apparently inexplicable monks’ deaths in the monastery.

At one point, friar William of Baskerville (Sean Connery) discovers that many books are hidden in the library because of their contents. Among them was Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which dealt with tragedy (the part we have access to today) and comedy (the part that seems to have been lost). The film deals precisely with this missing part (the comedy) but is vaguely mentioned by the philosopher himself. In the meantime, laughter was considered by many clergy members to be an attack on faith, as they believed that there was something demonic and sinful about laughter. Later, a direct relationship was discovered between reading the forbidden book and the mysterious deaths.

We bring this film narrative because it allows us to make a good analogy of the library with the psychic apparatus and its functioning proposed by Freud in the texts mentioned above. Like the Freudian psychic apparatus, the library is stratified; it is outside the register of consciousness, i.e., outside what can be consciously perceived. Several rooms are connected by a labyrinthine staircase that leads the subject to get lost to find himself. There is a secret passage from which there is an inside and an outside, which would impede the passage. Although not exerting the force of Freudian repression, it keeps hidden the information that remains inside. Once inside, there is a risk of getting lost and can no longer get out.

Along with constructing the concept of the unconscious, the Viennese master developed the concept of drive in different works. However, with metapsychology articles, especially *The Unconscious*, Freud (1915/1996) established a profound interrelationship between the unconscious and the drive. This interrelation led him

2 It is noteworthy that the psychic apparatus refers to an “explanatory model that does not assume any denoting sense of reality” (García-Roza, 2009, p. 46).

to verify that both the theory of the first topic and the concept of the unconscious were insufficient to explain the functioning of the psychic apparatus, especially in cases where the subject could not stand to be relieved of his symptom, i.e., cases of masochism and/or sadism.

Thus, in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” a text that signals the passage from the first topic to the second, Freud (1920/1996) proposes the life drive and the death drive, which go beyond the question of the pleasure/displeasure principle of the first topic and, in “The Ego and Id,” Freud (1923/1996) reviews the way of approaching the psychic apparatus, originating the second topic³ (1920-1939) with id, ego, and superego. Such instances do not have at the same time the quality of being conscious and unconscious so that the Id only has access to the external world through the resource of formation of the Ego. Thus, until then, related to the identifying constitution of the subject through the affection established with others, the ego becomes an instance of the second topic’s regulation. Its function is balancing the requirements between the id, related to the drive reserve, in which the principle of pleasure reigns, and superego, a critical instance acting as judge and censor concerning ego.

To move this part of the concept, we use Alfred Hitchcock (1960) in *Psycho*, a film that portrays the life of Norman Bates, a boy apparently shy and controlled by his mother. Žižek (2006), in *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*⁴, exposes an exciting and very illustrative analogy between the house, the environments in which the stagings take place, and the theory of the second Freudian topic:

Events take place on three levels: first floor, ground floor, basement. These three spaces reproduce the three levels of human subjectivity. The ground floor is the ego. Norman behaves there like a normal son, whatever is left of his normal ego in charge. Upstairs is the superego. The maternal superego, because the dead mother is basically the superego figure. Moreover, downstairs, in the pantry, is the id. The reservoir of these illicit drives. (Žižek, 2006)

The author complements his analysis of the film by presenting a vignette that perfectly exemplifies the dynamics of the psychic apparatus from this second topic:

When Norman carries the mother, or, as it turns out, the mummy, the corpse, the skeleton of the mother, from the first floor to the basement, it is as if he is displacing her in his own mind, as a psychic instance from the superego to id. Of course, this is the same

old lesson Freud elaborated that the superego and id are closely linked. The mother first complains as an authoritarian figure. . . . And then the mother immediately becomes obscene. . . . The superego is not an ethical instance, it is an obscene instance that bombards us with impossible orders and laughs at us when we fail to meet its demands. The more we obey, the more it makes us feel guilty. (Zizek, 2006)

Thinking of a superego that is not maternal but still exerts such a force on the ego leading to almost consumption, we have the film *The Girl on the Train*, directed by Tate Taylor (2016), based on the homonymous novel by Paula Hawkins. The film tells the story of Rachel Watson. After the frustration of her marriage and a troubling divorce, she finds herself fantasizing about the perfect life of a couple that she looks out for every day through the train window that takes her to the city. One day, the protagonist watches a strange scene between the couple and starts to investigate their lives.

This narrative interests us to make an analogy of the ex-husband’s influence on Rachel, which leads us to think that her ex-husband has become the main character’s superego, weakening her ego and destroying any connection to id. He fed the alcohol addiction and implanted a feeling of guilt that paralyzed her. As she believed in the image her ex-husband had created of her, her self-esteem was practically non-existent, which made her ego even more fragile.

The film’s ambiance is quite significant, as Rachel spends a great deal of time on a train, going from Ashbury – where she lives – to London and vice versa. Looking out of the window, she sees a world she sometimes yearns for but cannot be a part of. She wants someone else’s life because she feels she no longer has her own life. So, she imagines what it would be like to be the wife of that couple that she watches every day for a few seconds while the train passes in front of the couple’s house. This psychic movement of Rachel allows us to think about how Freud’s first theoretical formulations about fantasy have a fictional representation that tries to hide a psychic trauma that, when repressed, lies in the unconscious (Breuer & Freud, 1893-1895/1996).

From this brief Freudian rescue of the concept of the unconscious, we resorted to the words of Dunker (2008) for a possible definition:

the unconscious is the return. We do not postulate an identification between these two concepts, which are different from each other, but a broader and more generic notion (return) that conditions and includes a central concept (the unconscious). Return is an operative hypothesis, neither exclusive nor founding in psychoanalysis; *the unconscious is a metapsychological hypothesis that intends to explain and organize return forms*. The return can be described as a recognition phenomenon; only

3 It is noteworthy that the second topic does not exclude the first. On the contrary, they are complementary since psychic phenomena are described from different angles, just as it does not refer to *topos* but qualifications of instances (Garcia-Roza, 2009).

4 It is a documentary directed by Englishwoman Sophie Fiennes and starring the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, which addresses various psychoanalytic concepts and themes related to the human condition from scenes from great classics of cinema.

its derivatives apprehend the unconscious. (p. 112, emphasis added)

In Lacan, the unconscious can be thought of in two stages, as Santiago (2017) points out. There is a Freudian rereading in the first stage whose interpretation refers to an unconscious phenomenon that points to the unspeakable. In this sense, interpretation assumes the *status* of decipherment, in which “the analyst, precisely because he is the Other, must be able to say the analysand’s unspeakable. In the second, he adds sexuality as an element that shuffles the cards of his previous conception of the unconscious”. Thus, the interpretation starts to decipher the signifiers.

Regarding Lacan’s rereading of Freud’s work, the following formulation is found in the text “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”: “the unconscious is that part of the concrete discourse, in so far as it is transindividual, that is not at the disposal of the subject in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse” (Lacan, 1953/1998, p. 260). Thus, Lacan redirected psychoanalysis to the language field using and subverting linguists’ theories such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson. Moreover, in “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,” Lacan (1957/1998) demonstrated unconscious is structured like a language.

Considering that psychoanalysis operates fundamentally through the analysand’s speech, Lacan (1957-1958/1999), in *The Seminar, Book 5: The Formations of the Unconscious*, establishes the relationship between the formations of the unconscious and language, since it is through it that such formations are manifested. Thus, the theory of the chain of signifiers has become more consistent. The signifiers slide incessantly and insist on interfering in the discourse, either as a said escaping the saying intention or as an oneiric elaboration, making the dream present itself to its author as an enigma to be deciphered. Using the symbolic function of Lévi-Strauss, in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, the French analyst proposes the unconscious as a symbolic function. Language is the essential element of the symbolic constitution. According to Garcia-Roza (2009), “there is only the social because there is the symbolic” (p. 175) because it is the symbolic that enables exchange within social groups (Lacan, 1953/1998).

In this wake of thought, films such as *Quest for Fire*, by Jean-Jacques Annaud (1981), portraying a time 80 thousand years BC, the Paleolithic period, and the confrontation of three tribes of different species (*Homo neanderthalensis*, *Homo erectus*, and *Homo sapiens*) who sought the mastery of fire, and *10,000 BC*, by director Roland Emmerich (2008), showing the encounter of a primitive tribe with a lost civilization, highlight the cultural differences, the disagreements and symbolic encounters of each people. This issue can be better understood based on what Dunker (2008) points out: “This gives rise to a conception of the unconscious that

is neither reduced to its defense function nor its substance formed by complexes. However, this notion now depends on social exchanges” (p. 113).

In this sense, the unconscious presents itself as the discourse of the Other, the place of a pure signifier in which the subject’s division (cleavage) is marked. Chaves (2002) clarifies that this Other does not refer to the specular, similar other. However, it is the “Other as absolute otherness, i.e., the subject is now constituted by the Other (*Autre*), representative of language. The subject is, then, the effect of the signifier, as it is subject to its law” (p. 69). Thus, in the Lacanian sense, the unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on a subject. At this level, the signifier’s effects constitute the subject.

In *Cast Away*, directed by Robert Zemeckis (2000), we also perceive the importance of the other/Other. The film presents the story of Chuck Noland, an executive obsessed with performance excellence and total control of his actions, who, due to an accident, finds himself isolated on an island after a plane crash. Over time and through the unsustainable nature of loneliness, the protagonist invents an interlocutor named Wilson from a volleyball to make him company. We bring this cinematographic vignette to show how much the other/Other is still required to give the character back his existence.

In these terms, Dunker (2008) shows that the “notion of the unconscious structured as a language is displaced, . . . to a vigorous theory of the subject” (p. 117). Thus, from the imaginary-centered investigation until his return to Freud, Lacan (1949/1998) proposes approaching the hypothesis of the Freudian unconscious through the resource of considering the existence of the unconscious subject. This subject manifests himself through a lapse, a forgetting, a dream, a joke, a symptom, in short, a formation of the unconscious.

Final considerations

This study demonstrated how the teaching-transmission of a fundamental psychoanalytic concept, such as the unconscious, could be facilitated using the cinematographic universe. This is because film language is basically constituted by representations of images that slide signs, signifiers, and significations and can be thought of as an analogy of the psychic functioning developed by Freud and formalized by Lacan. It is in this context that Droguett (2004) ensures that

Cinema as a language organizes a narrative and creates feelings, so the images speak through the gaze, the camera, and the spectator. To look at the image is to be the image: this is the scientific subversion of psychoanalysis, marking the interdisciplinary practice of unconscious science and image science. (p. 256)

As for the unconscious concept, we point out that its origin predates the birth of psychoanalysis since it

was already constituted as a conceptual object of reflection both for philosophy and for the beginnings of psychology. Therefore, the Freudian novelty consisted of unleashing the unconscious from consciousness and elevating it to the status of a psychic instance. From then on, we have the construction of the psychic organization in the absence of our conscious actions. Not without reason, dreams, lapses, and jokes are considered both by the Viennese physician and the French psychoanalyst as unconscious formations.

However, it is interesting to note that the psychoanalytic conceptual framework cannot be treated in a watertight way since the theoretical construction is

based on clinical practice and vice versa, which provides this conceptual graph with constant movement. Thus, we emphasize that if Freud starts his formulations considering the unconscious similar to dreams, Lacan ends up showing it as structured like a language, symbolic in nature, and essential in constructing social ties.

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Psicanálise e cinema: aplicação da análise fílmica para a aprendizagem do conceito de inconsciente

Resumo: Partindo da constatação acadêmica da importância do ensino-transmissão da psicanálise na universidade, este artigo objetiva ser uma peça demonstrativa do quanto o aprendizado do conceito psicanalítico – inconsciente – pode ser facilitado por meio da linguagem cinematográfica. Para tanto, a investigação teórica e a análise fílmica psicanalítica foram escolhidas como métodos de pesquisa, estes balizados pela psicanálise aplicada. Utilizam-se filmes consagrados pela mídia, que vão desde *Psicose*, de Alfred Hitchcock, até *Alice no país das maravilhas*, de Tim Burton, a fim de dispor em movimento a conceituografia psicanalítica que organiza o conceito de inconsciente em Freud e Lacan. Observa-se, assim, que a novidade freudiana consistiu em desatrelar o inconsciente da consciência e elevá-lo ao estatuto de instância psíquica que se expressa por meio de sonhos, atos falhos, chistes e outros. A partir dessa concepção, posteriormente Lacan propõe o inconsciente estruturado como linguagem provendo o fio fundamental dos laços sociais.

Palavras-chave: ensino-transmissão, Freud, Lacan, teoria psicanalítica, vinhetas cinematográficas.

Psychanalyse et cinéma : application de l'analyse fílmique pour l'apprentissage du concept d'inconscient

Résumé : Basé sur l'importance de l'enseignement-transmission de la psychanalyse à l'université, cet article s'avère être une démonstration de la manière dont l'apprentissage du concept psychanalytique – l'inconscient – peut être facilité par le langage cinématographique. Pour ce faire, la recherche théorique et l'analyse psychanalytiques de films ont été choisies comme méthodes de recherche, celles-ci fondées sur la psychanalyse appliquée. Nous utilisons des films consacrés par les médias : de *Psychose* d'Alfred Hitchcock, à *Alice au pays des merveilles*, de Tim Burton, afin de mettre en mouvement la conceptualisation psychanalytique qui organise le concept d'inconscient chez Freud et Lacan. On constate ainsi que la nouveauté freudienne a consisté à découpler l'inconscient de la conscience et à l'**élever au rang d'instance** psychique qui s'exprime à travers les rêves, les actes manqués, les mots d'esprit et autres. A partir de cette conception, Lacan propose plus tard l'inconscient structuré comme le langage fournissant le fil conducteur du lien social.

Mots-clés : enseignement-transmission, Freud, Lacan, théorie psychanalytique, vignettes cinématographiques.

Psicoanálisis y cine: aplicación del análisis cinematográfico para aprender el concepto de inconsciente

Resumen: A partir de la observación académica de la importancia de la enseñanza-transmisión del psicoanálisis en la universidad, este artículo pretende ser una demostración de cuánto se puede facilitar el aprendizaje del concepto psicoanalítico inconsciente por medio del lenguaje cinematográfico. Para ello, se eligieron como **métodos de investigación la investigación teórica y el análisis cinematográfico psicoanalítico, guiados por el psicoanálisis aplicado. Se utilizan películas consagradas por los medios de comunicación, como *Psicosis*, de Alfred Hitchcock, y *Alicia en el país de las maravillas*, de Tim Burton, para poner en discusión la conceptualización psicoanalítica que organiza el concepto de inconsciente en Freud y en Lacan. Se observa, por tanto, que la novedad freudiana consistió en desacoplar el inconsciente de la conciencia y elevarlo a la categoría de instancia psíquica que se expresa mediante sueños, actos fallidos, chistes y otros. A partir de esta concepción, Lacan propone posteriormente el inconsciente estructurado como un lenguaje que proporciona el hilo fundamental de los lazos sociales.**

Palabras clave: enseñanza-transmisión, Freud, Lacan, teoría psicoanalítica, viñetas cinematográficas.

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