

**FROM FEMINISM TO QUEER THEORY AND PRACTICE.
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND AUTOBIOGRAFICTION IN GEORG GRODDECK'S
NOVEL DAS BUCH VOM ES'.**

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Queer disorientations in psychoanalysis

The aim of this paper is to show how Georg Groddeck -German doctor, writer, and psychoanalyst-queered psychoanalytic theory. What strategies did he choose in order to do that, and what impact did he have on Freud's closest disciples, such as Sándor Ferenczi and Otto Rank? To understand how queer entered psychoanalysis or how psychoanalysis became queered, first, we must ask what it exactly meant to queer theory in the first half of the 20th century. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sarah Ahmed proposed to think about queer as a way of being "disorientated" in an established social order. She defined queer as staying out of line and, therefore, having a different perspective in overly orientated space and time. If orientation in social and cultural order gives a feeling of familiarity, acting queer means staying out of line and breaking with the repetition of existing patterns. In this light, "queering a science" would mean breaking with the legitimized lines of thinking within disciplines based on linear transmission and inheritance. As Ahmed pointed out: "The lines of disciplines are certainly a form of inheritance. The line (...) that is drawn from philosopher to philosopher is often a paternal one: the line begins with the father and is followed by those who "can" take his place. Such lines mark out the edges of disciplinary homes, which also mark out those who are 'out of line'"². Concentrating on those who were out of psychoanalytic lines, I propose to think about their strategies of entering psychoanalytic center as a strategy of "queer positioning", understood as experiencing their position in the psychoanalytic movement through a constant feeling of unfamiliarity and strangeness.

Georg Groddeck's entrance in psychoanalysis not only failed, but it was a "queer art of failure". He appeared in psychoanalytic society during the 6th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Hague in 1920, where he presented his theory of symbols, human psychology, illness, and therapy. Although the correspondence with Freud started in 1917 and, without any doubt, Freud considered him his disciple, Groddeck did not think about himself as well-adjusted to Freud's society. In front of 119 members of the International Psychoanalytic Society, he gave a speech without previous preparation. Instead of reading a well-written paper, he decided to speak freely, uninhibitedly associating psychoanalytic concepts and categories, easily changing one subject to another. As Groddeck's biographers, Carl, and Sylva Grossman pointed out, his performance was scandalous in the eyes of well-orientated psychoanalysts³. Since he did not want to be defined by 3 them as "charlatan" he called himself the "wild analyst" instead, and -what was even more shocking- was proud of it! Being called "wild analyst" in the Psychoanalytic Society indicated the lack of professionalism and was signaled as a problem by Freud as early as in 1910⁴. By calling himself non-professional, Groddeck took a queer position — instead of following understandable patterns, he disoriented himself in scientific order, thus deviate from orthodox psychoanalysis. Although Freud was his mentor, Groddeck could not stay in line. He treated psychoanalysis as an inspiration for thinking independently, rather than as an assignment to transmit Freud's ideas.

Groddeck's orientation towards psychoanalysis⁵

Groddeck's first reaction to psychoanalysis was rather negative. In 1913, in his treatise *Nasamecu*⁶, he criticized Freud's theory as the noxious tendency regrettably gaining popularity in medicine. The title was an abridged version of a Latin phrase "Natura Sanat, medicus curat", by which the author made a reference to Ernst Schweninger's definition of physician's role as less significant in comparison to the power of nature. Later Groddeck will apologize Freud for a great misunderstanding of his theories. The first letter from him to Freud was sent the 27th of May, 1917. In its length and character, it resembled an "intellectual autobiography", where Groddeck described his scientific development and sketched his still changing theory. Since then, up till the publication of *Das Buch vom Es* the correspondence was devoted to the explanation of a difference between his notion of the "It" (Es) and Freud's understanding of this term.

In Groddeck's theory the It had a much wider meaning than in Freud's definition. The crucial fact is, however, that both terms were developed at the same time. While the author of *Traumdeutung* understood the It as an unconscious part of the psyche, for Groddeck it was the crucial element of human existence. In *The Ego and the It* (Das Ich und das Es), published in 1923, Freud divided psychic life into three parts, that is, id (Es), ego (Ich), and superego (Über-Ich). The It was the oldest, thus the most primitive, mental agency, where the instinctual drives raised to the surface. For Groddeck, on the contrary, the It was not one of the three mental agencies but their basis. In *Das Buch vom Es* he wrote: "*Der Mensch wird vom Es gelebt*", what means: "Man is⁷ lived by the It⁸". The It brings life and death, is responsible for the illness, as well as for the cure. It gives a possibility to create and, at the same time, creates; finally, it structures human perception and shapes the way life is and can be lived⁹.

It is clear that Groddeck saw the language, art, religion, and science as the evidence for the ontological status of the It. Although it can be phenomenologically perceived, the It escapes definitions. In other words, we can approach it, and still be incapable of determining what the It actually is. In this context Groddeck added: "I purposely use the expression stammering (...) because it is not possible to talk about the It, merely to stammer. (...)"¹⁰. In my opinion, the problem that the It cannot be precisely described does not prove, as Freud suggested, that Groddeck's concept was "mystical". On the contrary, it gives us the possibility to rethink the limits of psychoanalytic understanding of science and knowledge. The main argument made in Freud's society against Groddeck's notion of the It was that he contaminates scientific theory with philosophy and religious mysticism. It is true, that Groddeck was inspired not only by Freud's psychoanalytic theory, but also by German literature, art, and -unsurprisingly- by German philosophy. He was a good reader of Friedrich Nietzsche, thereby his concept of the It is similar to Nietzsche's early understanding of the culture as based on the dichotomy between Dionysus and Apollon¹¹.

In front of the International Psychoanalytic Society, Groddeck spoke about the It only two times -first in 1920, second in 1925 during the 9th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Homburg. Two years after the publication of *Das Buch vom Es*, he still felt that his revelatory idea had not been understood. Nevertheless, the book was accepted by Freud and published in his edition house¹². For the first time, psychoanalytic theory has been explicated in an experimental and unconventional way. On the one hand, *Das Buch vom Es* was an epistolary novel and an autobiography, on the other it seemed to be a philosophical treatise. The narrative structure of *Das Buch vom Es* is complicated and needs to be reexamined. What is interesting is that the narrator's voice is not monophonic or homophonic but polyphonic. In Troll-Groddeck's lectures, we clearly hear Freud's theory, although presented as the orthodox psychoanalysis, in other words, only one of the possible theoretical options.

The book, in its structure, is similar to a fugue. However, this strict composition technique is contaminated with Groddeck's unorthodox ideas and transformed into the psychoanalytic counterfugue. Whereas at the beginning the reader is convinced that he hears Freud's voice as the main subject, later it becomes clear that the theme belongs to Troll-Groddeck. If the author reassured in his letters to Freud, as well as in the first two letters in *Das Buch vom Es*, that he owes his ideas to the author of the *Traumdeutung*, later he abandons the imitation technique in order to inversely present his voice as the main subject, however teasingly incorporating Freud's diagnosis. In the third letter of *Das Buch vom Es*, the author writes:

So I haven't been clear, after all; my letter was horribly muddled (...). Well, dearest of friends, if you want to be instructed, let me advise you to consult a textbook, as they do at the universities. But for my letters you shall have herewith the key; everything in them sounds reasonable, or perhaps only a little strange, is derived from Professor Freud of Vienna and his colleagues; whatever is quite mad, I claim as my own spiritual property¹³.

Once again in his autobiographical text, Groddeck emphasizes his queer position towards psychoanalysis. He is inside of it, he lives on it, and yet he looks at Freud's theory not as the rightful heir, but from the perspective of the "other within".

The first letter of *Das Buch vom Es* starts predictable and is devoted to the image of a father. The narrator writes about his career as a doctor and his choice of this profession as a way to imitate and please his father. However, the following letters prove that for Patrick Troll, not the Oedipus complex was crucial for human psychosexual development, but a complex relationship with the mother, which preceded it. Thereby Groddeck does not speak about hostile feelings towards the father leading the child to identify with him. On the contrary, the author elaborates the subject of mother's image, which the child incorporates and seeks to imitate throughout its life¹⁴. In any future desire, aspiration, and activity Groddeck saw the reflection of the primal affection for the mother. In opposition to Freud, he developed a theory of the preoedipal phase, understood as a stage of psychosexual development more significant, than the Oedipus complex. In this light, the longing for her was not only a fantasy of re-experiencing the childhood but a desire to return to the mother's womb. Freud could not have supported this view since it was clear that Groddeck aimed to feminize psychoanalysis¹⁵.

Groddeck's rejection of phallocentrism brought a strong and negative reaction in the movement, especially from the part of Carl Abraham and Ernst Jones. Nevertheless Groddeck gained at least two partisans -Karen Horney and Sándor Ferenczi. As to Horney, she corresponded with Groddeck, and was inspired by his feminist version of psychoanalysis, which can be seen in her article entitled *The Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women*¹⁶, presented at The 7th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Berlin, where she criticized Freud's and Abraham's vision of female castration complex. In the context of motherhood, she also referred to Groddeck's second novel in two of her articles -*The Flight from Womanhood and The Dread of Woman*¹⁷. Reenacting a mother-child relation was understood in Groddeck's theory as a simultaneous performance of mother-child role. It meant experiencing childhood and motherhood as a one. It should be noted, that this particular view was later developed by Helene Deutsch¹⁸. If Freud did not want to accept Groddeck's arguments, he still saw his ideas entering the psychoanalytic center through the erred voice of his most well-oriented, that is to say orthodox, analysts. Undoubtedly, the author of *Das Buch vom Es* tried to make psychoanalysis more feminist, thus he disturbed the most trusted theoretical patterns.

It is not a coincidence that shortly after the publication of *Das Buch vom Es*, Freud faced two revelatory and ground-breaking works written by his closest disciples -Otto Rank and Sándor Ferenczi. The revolution brought with Rank's *Das Trauma der Geburt* (The Trauma of Birth) and Ferenczi's *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie* (Thalassa. The Theory of Genitality), published the same year, were partially devoted to the question of child's relation to the mother and human longing for the safety of her womb. It should not be forgotten that Rank was, after Freud, the first reader of *Das Buch vom Es*, where he made himself acquainted with Groddeck's concept of mother imago. As for Ferenczi, he read parts of the book before it was published, and had known the crucial discoveries of German doctor from their conversations. In their correspondence, we find Ferenczi's auto-analytical letter from the 24th of December 1921, where he described his lifelong feeling of being rejected and maltreated by his mother¹⁹. He also added, that, inspired by *Das Buch vom Es*, he unconsciously started to copy Patrick Troll's letters to a friend²⁰. Queering psychoanalysis meant in this case to estrange Freud's closest disciples from their master and orientate them towards Troll's heresy²¹.

In *Das Buch vom Es* we find a critic of the medical discourse of that time for its lack of objectivism. The author pointed out to the relative nature of categories, such as "normal", "anomalous" or "perverse". In one of the letters, he wrote:

Natural laws are the creation of men (...). Strike the word “unnatural” out of your vocabulary and there will be one stupidity less in your speech. (...) We must abandon the accepted idea that there are unnatural lusts and adopt the view that what we are wont to call perversion, masturbation, homosexuality, sodomy, or whatever these things are named, are innate tendencies of man²².

By calling them the “common property” of everybody’s nature, Groddeck rejected the division between “moral” and “immoral”, “normal” and “ill”²³.

From feminism to queer psychoanalysis.

If for members of The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society Groddeck’s interpretations sounded queer, the experimental character of *Das Buch vom Es* did not help to consider his work scientific. Groddeck’s writing strategy can be described as a probing of the scientific borders of that time. He did not write medical treatise -instead, he expressed his scientific thought through the epistolary novel, where psychoanalytic and psychiatric discourses interfered with autobiography. The choice of a letter as the most adequate genre for autoanalysis was not coincidental. Groddeck’s decision to transform psychoanalytic theory into the epistolary novel has at least three different meanings. Since he distanced himself from the medical jargon and criticized overly sophisticated scientific language, the possible way to break with rejected patterns was to create a new language for expressing what he had discovered. Therefore he resigned from multiplying psychoanalytical definitions and searched for a simplified approach in his writings. Whereas medical treatise would be hard to follow by nonspecialists, the lectures addressed to a friend, who was not acquainted with psychoanalytic theory, seemed more relevant. In other words, he simplified in order to popularize.

Another reason for writing the epistolary novel was Groddeck’s passion for literature. He intuitively combined fiction with life-writing literature, creating something that, using Stephen Reynolds term, we can name an autobiografiction²⁴. Further, by interfering theory with different literary genres, he revealed the artificiality of a distinction between scientific objectivity and alleged subjectivity of literature. In *Das Buch vom Es*, through writing Patric Troll’s psychoanalytic biography, Groddeck managed to write his own autobiography. Finally, he chose the form of a letter for his novel, precisely because it was one of the most used and popular genres in psychoanalytic practice. Not only Freud developed his theory in the correspondence with Wilhelm Fließ, but for many years he analyzed Ferenczi in their letters. At the time of working on *Das Buch...*, Groddeck corresponded with Freud²⁵. However, in the novel the narrator did not take a part of the analysts, but of the patient. If *Das Buch vom Es* was the effect of Groddeck’s self-analysis, the correspondence with Ferenczi, started two years before the publication of his novel, gave him a possibility to become a teacher. For Ferenczi, Groddeck was a perfect analyst, contrarily to Freud. Groddeck’s decision not to follow the orthodox psychoanalysis inspired Ferenczi and encouraged him to work independently. After all, the friendship with Groddeck, not the close relation with Freud, resulted in his most revelatory concept -the “mutual analysis”, where the power of analyst over the patient was rejected in order to create a new model of their relationship as based on mutual comprehension.

Groddeck’s strategy to queer psychoanalysis was not predictable and he did not use any “safe” patterns. In his work he orientated psychoanalysis theory towards two revelatory ideas: 1) the relation between the patient and a psychoanalyst is based on mutual friendship; 2) the dynamics of the transference and countertransference is not paternal, but maternal²⁶. By calling himself “wild analyst” the author of *Das Buch vom Es* consciously disorientated himself in Freud’s theory and started making his own way in psychoanalysis. He introduced new concepts, such as the importance of mother imago for psychosexual development of a child. Acting in the margins of Freud’s society, he also changed the patterns of psychoanalytic practice. Playing with an image of “maître ignorant²⁷” -a teacher who does not teach, rather observes his students- Groddeck inspired psychoanalysts closest to Freud, and, through their works, decentralized the psychoanalytic center. If the mother imago and preoedipal phase became important for women’s psychoanalytic theory before 1938, the mutual analysis should be considered as a queer practice perturbing established order of psychoanalytic treatment. In Groddeck’s case, the hostility of psychoanalytic society towards his ideas, although painful,

gave him a possibility not to follow, but to experiment and create -to play with psychoanalytic categories, to freely combine literary and scientific discourses and to transmit his ideas not with, but against the paternal line.

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Volver a Bibliografía Georg Groddeck
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Notas al final

- 1.- Trabajo presentado en la *Third International Conference Queer Modernism* (s) en la Universidad de Oxford, que tuvo lugar del 24 al 25 de abril de 2019 en Oxford.
- 2.- Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*, Duke University Press Books, Durham 2006, p. 2 20.
- 3.- Carl Grossman, Sylva Grossman, *L'Analyse sauvage*. Georg Groddeck, trad. A. Philippe, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1978, s. 97-107
- 4.- In the paper Über “wilde” Psychoanalyse, in: S. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke VIII*, p. 118-125.
- 5.- It is important to ask what brought Groddeck to contact Freud in the first place and why he decided to express his psychoanalytic thought not through scientific discourse but through literature? His biography undoubtedly gives us some important clues. Born in Bad Kösen in 1866, after finishing medical studies and successfully defending his doctoral dissertation, Groddeck started to work in the nursing house administrated by his teacher and mentor Ernst Schwenger in Baden-Baden. The future author of *Das Buch vom Es* spent almost whole his life working there, which gave him a possibility to preserve a distance and autonomy towards the scientific centers of that time. Around 1900 he started to write non-medical papers published in “Frankfurter Zeitung”. Writing absorbed Groddeck and fast became for him an everyday practice among the fulfillment of his duties as the main physician in Baden-Baden nursing house. In 1903 he wrote *Ein Frauenproblem*, in 1905 he published a short novel *Ein Kind der Erde*. 1906 brought a narrative poem *Die Hochzeit des Dionysos*. Between 1907 and 1911 his essays *Tragödie* order *Komödie* and *Hin zu Gottnatur* were published. At that time Groddeck started to experiment with literature, philosophy, and medical discourses, which he treated as a source of inspiration in his future works.
- 6.- G. Groddeck, *Nasamecu*, trad. P. Villain, Aubier-Montaigne, Paris 1980.
- 7.- G. Groddeck, *Das Buch vom Es. Briefe an eine Freundin, IPV*, Leipzig-Wien-Zurich 1923, p. 10. 7
- 8.- G. Groddeck, *The Book of the It*, p. 9. 8
- 9.- G. Groddeck, *La maladie, l'art et le symbole*, p. 133. According to Groddeck: “Everyday life, as well as philosophy and religion, prove that every human being and the whole of mankind have from the earliest times been preoccupied with the idea and examination of the It”.
- 10.- *Ibidem*, p. 133. “On closer inspection, one finds that all concepts and names are inadequate and imprecise when applied to the It because they contain symbols and as a result of the compulsion to associate they overlap with other conceptual areas thus expand more or less sharply defined complexes”.
- 11.- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, Raumann Verlag, Leipzig 1906. In Groddeck's first novel *Der Seelensucher* (The Seeker of Souls) published in 1921 in the International Psychoanalytic Edition (IPV), the protagonist August Müller, transfigured to Thomas Weltlein, was a Dionysian personification of the It. Driven by his unconscious he leaves behind moral, ethical, social, and cultural standards, legitimized and sustained by the society, and becomes a maniac in the eyes of his sister, friends, and others. In the novel, the holy fool Müller Weltlein expresses his understanding of the history, religion, and morality but in the way, that is incomprehensible for others. Hence, we could say that his opinions are not pronounced well, but stammered. He can name himself the “seeker of souls” but he will not be seen as a “real” scientist, rather as a “wild analyst”. Müller-Weltlein searched for a deeper understanding of human nature not with the help of any theory, but through the most prosaic thing such as the observation of the life and death of a bedbug. His idealism and utopianism will be later developed and transmitted into the image of the rebellious psychoanalyst Patric Troll — the author's alter ego from the next novel *Das Buch vom Es*.
- 12.- The first five letters were finished and sent to him in April 1921. Later the manuscript was read and edited by Otto Rank and — after small changes — finally published in 1923, see: C. et S. Grossman, op. cit., p. 108-110.
- 13.- G. Groddeck, *The Book...*, p. 20. 13
- 14.- *Ibidem*, p. 57. The narrator argues: “Man's emotional life reaches after this mother image as long as he lives, reaches so longingly, that yearning for sleep, for rest, for protection, for death, may well be regarded as a yearning for the mother imago (...)”.
- 15.- In *Das Buch vom Es* we find not only the psychoanalytical interpretations of the mother-child relation, but also the 15 analysis of a gestation period shared by both sexes. For Groddeck the man's pregnancy was a completely natural, psychosomatic phase. He wrote with a conviction, although not without a sarcasm: “The most striking sign of pregnancy is the enlarged stomach. What do you think about my idea (...), that an enlarged stomach betokens the appearance of pregnancy even in the case of a man? Indisputably he carries no child in his body. But his It creates the swollen stomach by means of eating, drinking, (...), because it wishes to be pregnant, and accordingly believes itself to be so (p. 16)”.
- 16.- Karen Horney, *On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women*, “*Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*” 1924, no 5, p. 50-65. Original text in German — K. Horney, *Zur Genese des weiblichen Kastrationskomplexes*, “*Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*” 1923, 9(1), p. 12-26. Horney wrote: “My problem was the question whether that dissatisfaction with the female sexual role which results from “penis-envy” is really the alpha and omega of the castration complex in women. We have seen that the anatomical structure of the female genitals is indeed of great significance in the mental development of women. (...) But the deduction that therefore the their repudiation of their womanhood is based on that envy seems inadmissible”, s. 64. Although she does not cite Groddeck, the author of *Das Buch vom Es* demoted Freud's idea of “penis-envy” as essential in female psychosexual development — see letter 11, where the narrator argues: “the creation of woman, the cutting of the rib, which gives rise to the wound of woman — this castration is, in the end, punishment for masturbation” (p. 105). Starting with the creation story in

Genesis, Groddeck inverts the perspective: if the primal desire is autoerotic then the castration complex tells us nothing about women, but about the men's castration anxiety. Women function in this founding myth of patriarchy as a projection of men's autoerotic fantasy — see also: P. Rudnytsky, *Reading psychoanalysis* (chapter 8) "Groddeck adapts Freud's phallogocentric theory of castration anxiety, but he fuses it with a brilliant critique of how, (...) women function as a projection of masculine desire and fantasy". Thereby Groddeck understands the castration anxiety (women's castration wound) as men's fantasy and dread. He does not write about the penis-envy.

17.- Horney cited Groddeck both times in *The Flight from Womanhood* ("Int. J. Psycho-Anal.", 1926, no 7, p. 324-339) and in *The Dread of Woman* (*Die Angst vor der Frau. Über einen spezifischen Unterschied in der männlichen und weiblichen Angst vor dem andern Geschlecht*, "IZP" 1932, 18 (1), p. 5-18).

18.- In 1924 Deutsch presented her understanding of women's psychology as doubled role-playing at the 8th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Salzburg, published year later in "IZP" (Bd. 11, H. 1). Although she used Groddeck's idea, the concept of man's pregnancy does not appear in her paper.

19.- G. Groddeck, *The Book...*, p. 52-53.

20.- Ferenczi wrote: "(...) nach meiner Erinnerung ist es so gewiß, daß ich als Kind zu wenig Liebe und zu viel Strenge von ihr erfuhr" (p. 52). In the same letter he described the "Palermo incident" concerning Schreber's case. He also noticed: "Jetzt merke ich, daß ich mit derlei witzige Brocken, die Ich in diesen Brief einstreue, Ihre "Briefe zur Freundin" kopiere. Sind Sie etwa die Freundin oder ist mir Ihre Freundschaft der homosexuelle Ersatz dafür?" (p. 57).

21.- All the revelatory works of that time — *The Ego and the It*, *The Theory of Genitality*, and *The Trauma of Birth* — "gravitated" towards *Das Buch vom Es*.

22.- G. Groddeck, *The Book...*, p. 65.

23.- The third "queer destabilization", introduced in *Das Buch vom Es*, was undoubtedly the inversion of the doctor- 23 patient role, described in the letter 30, where Groddeck wrote about his patient Miss G. Working with her, he realized that the treatment serves not only her but also himself. Her analysis was similar to the future analysis of Elisabeth Severn (by Ferenczi) and should be considered the early example of the "mutual analysis". Groddeck wrote: "Then suddenly I stood before the odd fact that I am not treating the patient, but the patient is instead treating me" (p. 267).

24.- The term was coined by Stephen Reynolds, author of *A Poor Man's House*, in 1906 and used to theorize the relation between autobiography and fiction. Max Saunders used this post-modern-sounding term as a key concept in his *Self-Impression. Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (2010), where he approaches the topic of the interference of different literary genres in modernist literature.

25.- Combining their correspondence with fiction, Groddeck created a figure of "wild analyst" Patrick Troll, who had 25 incorporated the author's unordinariness and Freud's severity as a teacher. He could have written about Freud, when he (in Troll's words) addressed his female friend with the words: "Dear and severe female judge" (p. 47).

26.- Troll's correspondent is female. Groddeck's fictive addressee was probably modeled on Hanneliese Schumann, a 26 member of the anti-capitalist Durer League. According to Rudnytsky, it could also have been Emmy von Voigt, whom he married in 1923.

27.- Jacques Rancière, *Maître ignorant. Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle*, Fayard, Paris 1987.