The critical reception of a new literary manuscript is often mixed. When it results in the determination of a definitive text and confirms previous analysis, it is usually deemed a valuable contribution. If, on the other hand, the discovery casts doubt on the existing body of knowledge, it may well be perceived as an unsettling presence and its import minimized. Such appears to have been the case with Gardner Davies's 1959 reproduction of the textual fragments for Mallarmé's first and last major work *Les Noces d'Hérodiade, Mystère*. Twenty-five years later, the manuscript is still used sparingly, and in many cases, not at all.

As a collection of some two hundred pages of working drafts, new segments, and cryptic notes, the Davies publication implicitly challenges those critical readings based exclusively on the 1945 Pléiade edition of Mallarmé’s work. This edition presents *Hérodiade* as a three-part drama (the “Ouverture ancienne,” the “Scène,” and the “Cantique de Saint Jean”) having a well-defined beginning, middle, and end. *Hérodiade* emerges in this criticism as a dialectical struggle for ideal purity, one that inevitably leads toward a “Merveilleuse synthèse hégélienne.” Both the Pléiade version and the Hegel influence are, in fact, so pervasive that even the two studies that deal directly with the manuscript (works by Davies and Huot) are infused with the same anecdotal, symbolic, and dialectical structures.
The Pléiade format is problematical, for it is clear that Mallarmé subjected his text to a number of major structural changes: notably, the elimination of the “Ouverture ancienne” and the addition of both a “Scène intermédiaire” and a new “Finale.” Stylistic changes also mark the later fragments of Hérodiade. The poet’s systematic replacement of narrative strains by hypothetical patterns, his subversion of conventional syntax, and his exploitation of alternative modes of signification (phonic and graphic) are but some of the techniques intended to disrupt synthetically oriented readings. Efforts to realign Hérodiade in compliance with narrative predictability become suspect, and, as Robert Cohn maintains, the “old Hegelian triadic pattern” simply “won’t do.”

Confronted with the title Eros Under Glass: Psychoanalysis and Mallarmé’s “Hérodiade,” readers may assume or object that I too will construct a masterplot. Yet, in lieu of the singular narrative that has shaped previous conceptions of Hérodiade, the present study attempts to demonstrate the coexistence of several conflictual subtexts. My reading of the manuscript, in other words, is geared toward the processive aspects of the work, that is, how it evolves, contradicts itself, represses its implications, and outwits the principles of its production. As Jean-Bellemin Noel argues in Vers l’inconscient du texte, the purpose of analyzing a manuscript or “avant-texte” from a psychoanalytic viewpoint is not the discovery of a plot but the elaboration and dismantling of a writing process.

It is not my intention to psychoanalyze either Mallarmé or his work. This would force Hérodiade into the narrow grid of analytic symbolism and create, quite simply, another version of Mauron’s “personal myth.” In reading Mallarmé alongside of Freud, my focus is not fixed psychological themes but a certain mechanics of repetition and displacement occurring in the textual revisions of poem and dream. Thus chapter 1 raises questions about the creative process, questions pondered by Mallarmé as much as by Freud. How is a text produced? What is the relationship between the various stages of its production? What is the role of the Unconscious in its formation? And perhaps most importantly, what implications does the work’s nontranslatable or unreadable aspects have for interpretation?
Freud would undoubtedly agree with Mallarmé’s observa-
tion that the essence of the poetic lies precisely in “what is not
said,” for the Unconscious cannot be inscribed in intelligible
discourse. To perceive the covert forces of desire at work in
dreams or poetry, the interpreter must become attuned to the
flow of energy through the text. For Freud, this means focusing
on the differences between the successive versions of the same
dream. For Mallarmé, it is a question of the “turning around of
the same text — of a second way of rereading” that “allows for
having the whole successively. . . .” In the remaining chapters,
I incorporate these strategies to examine the additions, repres-
sions, and hesitations that overdetermine the Hérodiade manu-
script, leaving it open, as it were, to alternative readings.

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