

# Science or Pseudoscience? Robert Saudek's Graphology Revised by Deconstruction

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**Abstract** | Background: This article focuses on the discursive changes that led to the reevaluation of the “scientific” status of graphology in the 20th century. Graphology is a psychological method of analysing handwriting, with a history of oscillation between science and pseudoscience. While graphology was established as a serious science in the 19th century and during the first three decades of the 20th century, it was later reconsidered. In the second half of the 20th century, graphology was removed from the realm of esoteric pseudosciences, such as palmistry, and replaced by the scientifically justified forensic analysis of handwriting. Objectives: The article aims to challenge the case study of Robert Saudek, a Czech interwar graphologist whose ambition was to make graphology a rigorous “science”; the author questions his “scientific” justification. What were his expectations of instant forms of handwritten traces? What led Saudek to identify graphology as an analysis of “brainwriting”? Did his way of thinking share the same “scientific” prejudices as anthropometry that flourished in the given period? Methods: The study employs a deconstructive approach to graphological analysis, aiming to question esoteric prejudices in its supposedly “scientific” thinking. This can help explain the underlying reasons why graphology was reevaluated after World War II and discursively pushed among the pseudosciences. By recalling Jacques Derrida’s formulation of the philosophical problem of the semantic instability of writing, the author examines the “scientific” bias in graphological analysis of handwriting. Further discursive examination of the relationship between anthropometry and graphology addresses the problem of phonocentric and logocentric prejudices that can be deconstructed. Results: The article identifies a double bind in Saudek’s psychological analysis of “brainwriting”. On the one hand, Saudek believes no living being can repeat their bodily traces identically. On the other hand, Saudek phonocentrically interprets them as forming recognisable personal styles, allowing for the classification of the writers according to the expected resemblance, authenticity, and identity of written traces and writing brains. Saudek also logocentrically judges the supposed psychological qualities of writers according to his own typology of human “brains”. Conclusion: The study concludes that Saudek’s method of “brainwriting” analysis omits the instability of manual movements in the process of manual writing. The author argues that, by associating the writer’s brain activity with their instantly formed traces, Saudek’s “brainwriting” analysis shares the same “scientific” prejudices with anthropometry of the same historical period. Deconstructing the phonocentric and logocentric prejudices underlying his graphological analysis allowed us to understand the reasons for the discursive shift in the field of writing analysis from graphology to forensic analysis of handwriting.

**Keywords** | Robert Saudek - Graphology - Handwriting - Jacques Derrida - Deconstruction - Writing

## Introduction

A hundred years ago, graphology was a respected field of study. Nowadays, however, it is considered a pseudoscience. As the humanities and social sciences began to question prejudices underlying their own discourses, the psychologically oriented discourse of graphology was replaced by the forensic discourse of handwriting analysis. Unlike graphology, forensic analysis of handwriting declares that it does not seek to determine the writer's psychic or cognitive qualities; it does not compare the analysed handwriting to the writer's "brain", which is also understood as the soul, or the *psyché*. Forensic analysts compare writing samples to determine whether they were written by the same or different authors. Because forensic analysis treats writing as authorial work, it keeps its distance from graphology. In this new discursive light, graphology appears to be a contradictory "pseudo-science"[1] based on the graphologist's own imagination, which is less reliable and less rigorous than the measurements that underlie forensic handwriting analysis. To better understand what graphologists believed in, I propose to examine what their expectations were based on. I argue that Derrida's deconstruction can help us understand graphology as a historical example of scientific phonocentrism and logocentrism related to handwriting.

### Background: Discursive justification of the "brainwriting" analysis

The discursive goal of graphology is to examine handwriting as a personal sign that is both psychologically revealing and legally reliable. As a personal trace, handwriting was expected to certify both the "true" nature of its writer's mind and the authenticity of their physical presence in the form of their manual trace. Moreover, handwriting was supposed to be not only a result of the natural expression of the writer's brain and the authentic trace of their physical presence, but also to be manually, not mechanically, repeatable. The degree of similarity was supposed to be sufficient to be recognised as identical.

To better understand graphological discourse in its complexity, I propose to examine the differences in expertise between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century psychological graphology. In the nineteenth century, this ambition was accomplished by police officer Alphonse Bertillon, father of criminalistic dactyloscopy and inventor of the set of mugshots called *bertillonage*[2], which were celebrated as the most objective referential photographic portraits of citizens, whose physical appearance could be analysed to reveal their psychological qualities. Jean-Hyppolite Michon established graphology as a new psychological discipline dealing with handwriting. From 1868, Michon started a collaboration with chirologist Adolphe Desbarrolles, who saw analogies between palmology and handwriting analysis. Their book *Les mystères de l'écriture*, combining psychological-occultistic views of handwriting, was released in 1872. Later, Michon published his own books: *Système de graphologie* (1875), introducing his system of handwriting signs, and *Méthode pratique de graphologie* (1878), in which he explains the psychological principles of graphological analysis. Michon's psychological theory presupposed that the shapes of handwriting visually mirror the writer's soul. He was the first to describe an analogy between the characteristics of the writer and the characteristics of their handwriting (Fraenkel 1992, 211).

In his paper "Hieroglyphic Writing", Tomáš Dvořák (2017) builds on this observation that there is a methodological shift from the French school of the end of the 19th century to the German school of the beginning of the 20th century. While Michon and his French school examined personal signs in handwriting as symptoms of psychological qualities of the writer, the German school led by Ludwig Klages abandoned the belief that handwriting is a kind of graphically performed gesticulation, and distinguished three main aspects of writing (force, speed and density) to observe changes in the

intensity of these elements in handwriting, as well as their unique rhythm, expressed mostly in the way letters are connected. Their conception of physical expressivity differs considerably. I argue that this shift in the metaphysical expectations underlying graphological expertise can be better understood when viewed in light of a triple interdependence between graphology and other scientific and legal practices.

Firstly, graphology expects that the writer's brain activity and manual work are naturally similar. Graphology and psychology share the presupposition that it is possible to uncover the inner qualities of an individual by observing their genuine ways of acting in the world. This approach calls for a fair amount of psychological observation and intuition on the part of the graphologist. According to Klimoski and Rafaeli, when Klages suggested that handwriting, like personality, is a Gestalt (Klimoski, Rafaeli 1983, 192), the German school of graphology began referring to "expressive movements". They argued that graphological interpretations should be based on an examination of the handwriting as a whole entity, as a picture, a self-portrait of the writer. In the Gestalt school of graphology, the physical expressions of an individual mirror their unique soul. This ambition leads to the supposition that each action of an individual reflects their inner qualities, which reveal their unique soul or *psyché*. If we projected this psychological ambition onto the area of handwriting analysis, we would get the ambition of graphology, which appropriated the psychological presupposition that manual writing expresses the unique characteristics of its writer's mind. In graphology, the collection of the writer's particularly shaped handwritten letters means the collection of their psychological qualities. The writer's style naturally expresses the writer's brain and leaves its authentic imprint on the legal document.

Secondly, graphology expects that the graphic qualities of the writer's authentic trace directly express traits of a diagnostic type of their personality. Besides its kinship with psychology, graphology shares its basic ambition with anthropometry, in which every person's physical appearance is expected to express their psychological qualities. Based on measurements and typologies of head, eyes, nose, mouth shapes, and so forth, it was supposed to be possible to determine the natural psychological disposition of measured individuals. The results of these examinations were used to prove the supposed criminal disposition of suspects. Medical inventor Cesare Lombroso, founder of a positivist scientific school of penal law and forensic psychiatry, based his research on the observation, cataloguing, and statistical comparison of physical differences, from which he produced race and gender typologies. In *Criminal Man*, Lombroso draws on graphology to describe the handwriting of criminals using his diagnostic typology of human abnormalities. By attempting to distinguish various symptomatic signs of handwriting, which could indicate the writer's hidden tendencies, Lombroso notes that "the signatures I have collected fall mainly into two clearly defined groups. Only the signatures of semi-illiterate criminals, who include some of our most famous brigands, retain a childish character and are not easy to categorise" (Lombroso 2006, 111). To recognise and predict writers' predisposition to various criminal activities, Lombroso observed criminals' handwriting styles and classified them as those of murderers and thieves[3].

Thirdly, graphology expects that the writer's style of writing is so revealing that it allows one to judge and control them as a citizen. Graphology, as an attempt to understand the inner life of suspects, as an option for enterprises to test their employees, and as a daily practice of character analysis on fairgrounds and in pubs, played a part in this field of social control. The widespread demand for a quick, safe, and natural method of accurately determining the character of a person points to a transformation in the social structure of work, in which the human factor has become increasingly important as a means of production. Psychologists, such as Ludwig Klages, were

ambivalent regarding this economic exploitation of professional competence; they needed proof of the usefulness of psychology, yet they emphasised the values of disinterestedness and objectivity. These values were mostly threatened by amateurs and commercial institutes that wanted to present themselves as scientific actors in a situation of economic profit. In this respect, Schlicht emphasises that “it was exactly because of this that the negotiation of epistemic ideals, techniques, and boundary work between science and non-science became so important” (Schlicht 2020, 174).

In an attempt to increase the “scientific” impact and importance of graphology, graphological theories of the 1920s and 1930s tended to move away from psychology, based mostly on poetic descriptions of shapes of letters, towards statistically justified measurements of handwriting speed, dynamics, and rhythm of movement. This was also the approach of Czech inter-war graphologist Robert Saudek[4], who emphasised his “scientific” ambition to rebuild graphology as a serious method combining psychological and forensic ways of examination. Saudek argues that it is impossible for any living being to repeat perfectly identical movements. He believes, however, that it is a peculiar characteristic of every individual, even by their essential constitution, that they should repeat movements in a similar manner. This personal manner of expression can be distinguished from the writing styles of all other human beings. Let us examine this problem with the example of Saudek’s psychology of handwriting.

### **Objectives: Questioning the case of Robert Saudek’s graphology**

In “Experimental Graphology”, Robert Saudek (1929) expresses regret that graphology is not given sufficient respect. He tries to legitimise it as a serious “scientific” field of study and analysis. For seventy years, graphology was known only as an amateur hobby of the intellectual elite or as a “fake” science practiced by professional readers of character from the handwriting. The scientific treatment of the subject does not date back further than twenty years. As Saudek explains, “It is only today, when we have succeeded experimentally in isolating the various factors of individual letter-formations, that a scientific treatment of the many connected problems relating to the technique, physiology, and psychology of handwriting has become possible” (Saudek 1929, 468). Before this isolation had been effected, the graphologists followed up on the assumption that since everyone obviously writes by “by their own hand”, their writing must be typical of their “character”. Saudek himself finds that “ridiculous as this theory may seem, there still is a grain of truth in it” because it explains “the fact that amateur graphologists do sometimes succeed in drawing an almost incredibly accurate sketch of a writer’s character” (Saudek 1929, 468).

During Saudek’s inter-war era, psychological and forensic analyses were not yet separated – both pervaded the discipline of graphology. Forgery was expected to be determined by both criminalistic procedures using photography and chemistry, as well as psychological analysis. In *Psychology of Handwriting* (1925), Saudek demonstrates this dual ambition of his “experimental” analysis of handwriting on the example of a known case of fraud, which was justified by both forensic and psychological examinations. Saudek praises handwriting as a natural and authentic visualisation of the writer’s character through their personal expression in originally chosen and designed shapes, direction, and rhythm. He believes that the revealing nature of manual graphic expression enables the identification of the writer’s unique style and distinguishes it from a forgery. To help uncover forgeries, he suggests paying attention to unexpected changes and interruptions of style, for instance, the occurrence of unjustified dots of ink in handwriting: “Technically said, fingerprints that were left by a pen in its criminal activity as a trace of its crime, as its proof” (Saudek 1925, 218).

According to Saudek’s “scientific” conception of graphology, every writer’s style is based on a personal standard, which can be determined by examining the three main features. Firstly, the

typical inclination of writing. As every writer has the inner tendency to organise the space properly and to compose a characteristic “picture” out of the written letters, different inclination means different writers. Secondly, the typical spacing in writing. Because the distribution of writing in space is strictly personal, in a questioned document, gaps between lines and words are different. Saudek also suggests bearing in mind that a forger’s deviation from the genuine standard of rhythm changes with higher speed. At higher speed, the rhythm of large and expressive writing is more susceptible to forger’s changes” (Saudek 1925, 226). Thirdly, the recognisable originality of forms. As “openness” and simplification of letters is always individual and symptomatic, a “questioned document displays different openness of shapes” (Saudek 1925, 217).

In the chapter titled “Proof of identity”, he introduces handwriting as a form of natural and authentic “brain-writing” (Saudek 1925, 214) that can be used to reliably test and determine which handwriting is genuine and which is forged. Saudek tries to demonstrate “in what manner, from purely graphological knowledge and considerations, the identity or non-identity of handwriting may be recognised” (Saudek 1925, 214). Using the example of the right-handed and left-handed writing of Viscount Horatio Nelson, which has been considered entirely different for more than a century, Saudek proposes “to prove their absolute identity, *i.e.*, to show that both writings are one and the same brainwriting” (Saudek 1925, 214). He also wishes, “to prove using a graphological examination of a genuine and a forged Thackeray manuscript the existence of forgery” (Saudek 1925, 214).

The metaphysical concept of identity, constructed by analogy between handwriting and brainwriting, appears throughout numerous Saudek’s works on graphology and is mostly justified by technical measurements. In “Experimental Graphology”, Saudek emphasises that his characterological analysis of handwriting must proceed in accordance with a joint forensic and psychological method of analysis and synthesis. In this sense, the aim of the graphologist is, on the one hand, to determine whether the document in question is the work of its reputed writer and, on the other hand, “to prove the identity of the handwriting in its inconspicuous characters with that of the suspected person, or to discover which one of several suspected persons has produced the forgery. In all cases, the expert relies on the fact that the inconspicuous features of handwriting cannot be consistently disguised in a manuscript of any length, and very often they are not consistently disguised even during the writing of a single word” (Saudek 1929, 468).

In the discourse of graphology, as promoted by Saudek, handwriting is understood as naturally produced “brainwriting” (Roman 1998, 13): the writer’s own hand and brain seem to fuse into a single authentic source of the writer’s personal identity. Graphological analysis expects that all handwriting, even the forged one, naturally reveals its writer’s psychological qualities. Can such a belief be deconstructed?

### **Methods: Deconstruction of phonocentric and logocentric expectations**

In his subversive reading of the most referential texts of Western philosophy, Derrida points out that things are not semantically transparent; their meaning is neither perpetually present, nor given naturally or immediately, but always by a certain mediation or representation, through a substitute, by the deferral of meaning generated by reading. To deconstruct this expectation of representation, Derrida proposes his concept of trace, which is self-effacing and haunting[5].

According to Derrida, Western metaphysics privileges voice over writing, making it voice-centred, phonocentric. In Derrida’s view, the voice takes over writing violently. While there is always more meaning in writing than in voice, voice reduces the meaning of writing to its own supplement. In his

own grammatological approach to writing, Derrida subversively overturns this hierarchy by making voice a supplement of writing. In doing so, he aims to subvert the apparently “natural” hierarchical relation of binary oppositions, which has been established as metaphysical evidence in philosophy. For instance, Derrida finds the metaphysics of voice’s “natural” superordination over writing problematic: the metaphysics forces philosophers to privilege voice as the primary source of meaning, and to marginalise writing as a mere semantic derivation of the voice’s meaning. As he puts it in *Of Grammatology*, where he deals with the violence of phonocentrism, “In linguistics as well as in metaphysics, phonologism is undoubtedly the exclusion or abasement of writing” (Derrida 1997, 102).

A graphologist supposes that the writer’s brain can be identified, because it composes a graphic pattern that the writer inevitably and repeatedly produces by hand. In contrast, from the point of view of deconstruction, handwriting may be seen as a semantically precarious production of writing. As Borradori puts it, Derrida aims to subvert the logocentric, apparently natural, hierarchical relation of binary oppositions, “A given identity may not be perfectly homogeneous because it includes traces of what it explicitly excludes. Deconstruction searches for these traces and uses them to give voice to that which does not fit the dominant set of inclusions and exclusions. Deconstructive interventions de-totalize self-enclosed totalities by placing them face to face with their internal differentiation” (Borradori 2003, 147).

I argue that, contrary to Derrida’s grammatology, Saudek’s graphology examines handwriting from a phonocentric and logocentric position. Let us take a closer look.

### **Results: Deconstructing Saudek’s phonocentric and logocentric expectations**

Using Derrida’s deconstruction, I propose to deconstruct Saudek’s ambition to “scientifically” identify the types of “brains” of writers by interpreting their handwritten traces using successively poetic description, cinematic measurement, and psychological classification. If we engage more closely with Saudek’s graphological approach to handwriting, we find out that it differs significantly from Derrida’s grammatological approach to writing. While Derrida opens up the meanings of the writing to the dissemination of traces, Saudek closes the range of possible interpretations of handwriting samples to fit their “reading” into his pre-established categories. Based on these categories, he makes psychological diagnostics of the writer as a type of person. The visual aspect of handwriting supports Saudek’s psychological imagination, based on his belief in the full presence of fixed meanings in the written traces themselves. In order to “scientifically” evaluate various samples of handwriting, Saudek translates the visual material into language using his own description corresponding to the pre-determined qualities he is searching for. By doing so, he verbalises the visual traces of writing and transforms them into metaphorical qualities fitting into the psychological, criminological, and juridical categories he uses. Let us take a closer look at Saudek’s graphological examination according to these underlying phonocentric expectations.

- Expectation of Resemblance

The first expectation is that of *resemblance* of handwriting, which supposes that similar qualities can be found in the writer’s brain activity and hand movements while manually writing. This expectation is to be revealed through the graphologist’s experimental measurement and description of the given sample of handwriting, which is understood as a mirror of the writer’s mind. These graphological procedures are supposed to uncover the writer’s “natural’ inclination to produce a unique, psychologically shaped composition of letters that reflects the writer’s singular brain setting. Saudek expects that there is a similarity between the writer’s brain and the way they

“naturally” write by hand. He claims this can be proven by describing the formation of letters according to the pre-established scale of visual qualities of the manuscript and corresponding psychological qualities of the writing person on the one hand, and by measuring the personal execution and direction of movement of handwriting in time and space on the other. Saudek illustrates this rule of similarity between the person's brain and their handwriting in the case of forgery by imitation and alternation of handwriting based on an intentional change from slanted writing to upright writing. He claims that such a forgery can be easily recognised because the rule of natural similarity is broken – there is a detectable difference in the personally symptomatic organisation of space in the case of the forged handwriting. According to Saudek, the inclination of handwriting naturally resembles the character of its writer; therefore, the altered inclination always betrays its writer. In *Psychology of Handwriting*, Saudek mentions this rule, stating that by the alteration of the slanted angle to an upright angle, the writing becomes automatically narrower and simpler. To determine the influence of alteration of the angle of writing on spacing, he finds it necessary to take into account “the great symptomatic importance” (Saudek 1925, 215) of the general disposal of space, which allows him to furnish proof that even such a far-reaching alteration as a persistently altered angle of writing, and such a fundamental change in the primary conditions of writing as the change from one hand to the other, will yet not alter the deeply rooted inclination of every writer for a quite definite disposal of space. This is unique to each individual and remains unchanged even by such extreme influences (Saudek 1925, 214).

- Expectation of Authenticity

Saudek's second metaphysical expectation is the *authenticity* of handwriting, which supposes that the writer's authentic trace reveals traits of a diagnostic type of personality. This expectation can be confirmed using graphological procedures of measurements and statistical comparison, and their ability to uncover the singular dynamics of the writer's rhythm and speed of writing. According to Saudek's rule of authenticity, any forgery results in differences in spacing and alters the genuine rhythmic distribution of writing. While handwriting becomes narrower at a higher speed, and the writer is more authentically “himself”, at a slower speed, the writer controls himself better, which also produces more space. Therefore, excessive spacing indicates slower writing, which indicates a desire for better control over the execution of writing, which may be caused by an attempt at forgery. According to Saudek's metaphysical thinking, an authentic rhythm indicates the genuine presence of the writer, while any version of a broken rhythm indicates the absence of the original writer and the presence of a forger. An example of this reasoning can be found in Saudek's paper “Writing Movements As Indications Of The Writer's Social Behaviour”, where he notes that the more the writer is concentrated on the subject matter, the more “natural” their writing becomes (the term “natural” referring to unconscious, mechanised movements). The slower a person writes, the easier it is for them to deliberately shape their script. Slow writing does not necessarily have to be “unnatural”, i.e., deliberate and artificial, but it can be. Saudek argues that his graphological insight gives the indications from which we can reliably establish whether handwriting was produced spontaneously, with quick, unconscious, and mechanised movements, or rather with deliberate concentration on the chirography. These indications, which give us reliable clues to define traits of the writer's social behavior, have been shown and isolated by a series of experiments and measurements (Saudek 1931, 337).

- Expectation of Identity

Saudek's third metaphysical expectation is the personal *identity* of handwriting, which supposes that the writer's style of writing is so revealing that it allows one to judge and control them as a citizen. This expectation is confirmed by graphological procedures of observation and interpretation

of regularities and irregularities that appear in the feature complex of handwriting. Saudek argues that his method of experimental graphology allows him to recognise one's style of handwriting according to the originality in forms that may be seen as a kind of personal identity. According to Saudek's rule of identity, repetition of the original shape of letters and of the whole feature complex inevitably generates the singular style of the writer. In his metaphysical thinking, the false identity of the writer can be recognised by an exaggeration of forms that differ from the original personal stylisation of the writer who is being imitated. Saudek demonstrates this alteration of the writer's identity through forgery on the example of a modification of the writer's social behavior, accompanied by their discomfort and doubts about the way this new identity is perceived. He describes the forger's hesitation as follows: "The writer feels intimidated and inferior towards the outer world, we notice strong initial *under-emphasis*, and the I, the symbol of the writer's Ego, is also under-emphasised and written with the same uncertainty to which the retraced and touched-up characters are due. This writer in his social behavior tries to make himself inconspicuous, so as not to attract the attention of those around him" (Saudek 1931, 370). Saudek goes even as far as stating that "From the graphological point of view, he is a hypocrite with a 'bad conscience'." He happens to be an employee whose non-integrity was realised by his employees when his actual frauds were found out after I had given an S.O.S. concentrating on trustworthiness" (Saudek 1931, 370).

Deconstruction of such a judgmental interpretation of the shapes of manual writing uncovers a logocentric double bind in Saudek's reasoning. On the one hand, he believes his new scientific approach to handwriting as brainwriting helps to read it as a naturally characteristic expression of its writer's instant brain activity. On the other hand, by measuring and describing shapes and speed of writing in one sample of manual writing, he is not judging the instant writing or the writer's instant state of mind, but rather the supposed qualities of the writer's brain, which are constant rather than instant. By examining instant manual expressions according to his own logocentric typology, Saudek makes diagnostic and even prognostic conclusions about the writers as people.[6] When the graphologist's focus shifts from hand to brain, the instantly writing hand seemingly disappears from the process of manual writing. The formally unstable traces become stable, constant, and representative characteristics of the person who left them. This logocentric expectation of Saudek's "brainwriting" analysis can be explained by Derrida's deconstruction. From his perspective, Saudek's work in graphology can be seen as an attempt to recognise both individual and group characteristics of writers based on the visual shape of their handwriting. In order to achieve it, he logocentrically presupposes it is possible to "read" these forms as genuinely determining personal expressions and rhythms that are principally present in every written form. Handwriting is a self-portrait of the brain. Such a genuine picture – a direct, unmediated imprint of the brain – is considered to be a "scientific" support for a psychological analysis of the writer.

## Conclusion

Robert Saudek's graphology is a historical example of psychologically biased phonocentrism and logocentrism in the scientific interpretation of handwritten text. By graphologically analysing the visual traces of handwriting, Saudek attempted to transcend beyond them to access the psychological profile of the writer. By doing so, Saudek used the concept of "brainwriting," referring to graphic traces produced by the writer's brain.

Saudek's graphology is thus an attempt to reconstruct the writer's psychological personality in their personal "brainwriting". Based on his description of graphic shapes, expected to correspond to the writers' psychological qualities produced by their self-representing brains, the graphologist composes a complex representation of the supposed writer's "personality". His triple phonocentric

expectations introduce equivalence between the observed resemblance and authenticity of individual shapes left by handwriting and their supposedly constant psychological identity generated by the writer's "brain". In the graphological concept of "brainwriting", the writer's supposed psychic and examined graphic qualities fuse into one graphic-psychic compound. Although the shapes of the letters permanently vary in the process of handwriting, graphologists tend to see them as "repeating" themselves, and recognisable because they are designed by one brain, one *psyché*. By attempting to conduct a psychological examination of the writer's "brain" based on their handwritten traces, Saudek's voice imposes logocentric restrictions on the possible meanings of those traces and reduces them to a single psychological diagnostic reading. It is especially in this sense that Amend and Ruiz (1980, 184) pointed to Saudek's judgmental classification of graphic signs in handwriting and their interpretation according to his own prejudices. In their view, Saudek not only describes and classifies the forms he sees, but also judges them as symptoms of a socially abnormal or morally weak character of the writer.[7]

Once deconstructed, Saudek's logocentric diagnostic ambition and phonocentric expectations of resemblance, authenticity, and identity of graphical traces of handwriting and psychological qualities of the writer are deceiving: the supposed "brainwriting" produces an interval of varying similarity of manually written traces that does not guarantee any reliable psychological definition of the writer. For the same reasons that Derrida helped us uncover, forensic analysis has abandoned both anthropometric and graphological approaches to handwriting. What makes the contemporary forensic analysis "scientific" is that it recognises that instantly handwritten traces can be only interpreted at the level of traces themselves. The symptomatic and diagnostic reading of handwriting, promoted by Saudek in the interwar era, was finally revealed to be based on pseudoscientific biases.

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[1] Ronald M. Buckley, Russell W. Driver, and Dwight D. Frink claim that "graphology should not be used in a selection context" in human resources management because did not demonstrate acceptable validity. The authors see this selection technique as not helping to assess personality because "interpretation is in terms of the individual graphologist, and that person's biases and perceptions" (Buckley, Russel, Frink 1996, 83).

[2] According to Persifor Frazer, Berthillon's system of measurements differentiates between and classifies living beings so "that one can go almost immediately to the case in which the previous record of an unrecognized but suspected recidivist or old offender will be found" (Frazer 1909, 321).

[3] In Lombroso, "The first group is made up of signatures of murderers, highway robbers, and brigands, who generally elongate their letters, adding curves to the upper and lower extensions" (Lombroso 2006, 111). He further adds that the second group of signatures, belonging to thieves, "is distinct from that of highway robbers and lacks emphatic verticals. In general, the letters are

soft and ill-formed, and the signatures are clear and easy to read" (Lombroso 2006, 113).

[4] Robert Saudek is examined as both writer and researcher in Michal Topor (2023, 40-6).

[5] As Legrand puts it, the Derridean trace is ephemeral, something always in the process of disappearing into the absorbing whole: each trace is dissolved in the whole, as the trace in the sand leaves but sand. Likewise, the traces that constitute the law constantly alter themselves as traces to become the law that they are constituting they are never "present" in the sense in which one colloquially understands "presence" ... It is present, but not as the self-same history or ideology that was: it is present as a "remainder effect" (Legrand 2009, xxiii).

[6] This expectation, which attempts to understand the shapes of manual writing without considering the role of the hand, corresponds to Schlicht's observation that graphology was a symptom of a growing density of social control by practices of categorising people by their appearances or expressions: "Because graphology promised an insight into the character, the predispositions, and the type of human beings, it never lost contact to the esoteric circles of scientific experts, thereby generating a particular need for the experts to distance themselves from what could not count as legitimate knowledge. As indicated by its widespread use in companies, graphology was also part of a growing interest in controlling or categorising people" (Schlicht 2020, 173).

[7] An example of Saudek's influence in graphology is provided by Huber and Haedrick, who introduce the graphological work of T. L. Smith, a pupil of Robert Saudek, who published a procedure for the classification of handwriting based on variations in six aspects of writing: pressure, form, speed, spacing, size, and slant, that were broken into 59 subclassifications. While Smith claimed that the categories of the classification were measurable qualities, Huber finds his language judgemental, thus "not convincing. For example: *spacing* is subdivided into *perfect*, *good*, and 12 divisions (4 each) of *fair*, *poor*, and *bad*." (Huber, Haedrick 1999, 168).

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