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# 9 SIGMUND FREUD

## TIME REPRESSED AND EVER-PRESENT

*1899*

On the fourth day of the new year, 1899, Sigmund Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess, his intimate friend, confessor, and scientific sounding board, "today I cannot go on writing along the lines I intended because the thing is growing. There is something to it. It is dawning."[1]

Freud was at his desk on the second floor of Berggasse 19, the mezzanine floor below his apartment, trying to find something beyond his livelihood as a doctor that would bring him recognition as a scientist. For seven years he had spent most of his late evenings here alone, smoking and scratching away with a steel-point pen at articles for medical journals. Before him were the ashes of spent cigars and a large, disorderly, steadily growing manuscript that he called the "Egyptian Dream-book" and sometimes just "the Dream." He had been thinking about it for six years. In 1897 he had begun putting it on paper and given it a working title: *Die Traumdeutung*—giving meaning to dreams. Six months ago Freud had put the manuscript away in a drawer; but in this wintry first week in January 1899, he pulled it out again. One of his memories—two boys and a girl eating fresh bread near a field full of dandelions—had just proved to be in the wrong place in time, projected from his early childhood (when it had really happened) to his teens. In its new place it had acted like a screen, veiling a youthful sexual longing that he hardly remembered at all. This discovery of what Freud decided to call a "screen memory" was no more strange and counterintuitive than so many other discoveries he had been making since beginning his psychotherapeutic practice in 1886; but this was the one that brought *Die Traumdeutung* out of the drawer and onto the desk for good. He began a short paper on it, centered on a dialogue between Doctor Freud and himself disguised as his own patient, a sly transformation of confession into case history that pointed toward a new and final form for the "Egyptian dream-

book."[2] In ten months of late evenings and a summer at Berchtesgaden he had the manuscript finished. Published by Deuticke of Vienna in November 1899, but dated 1900, *The Interpretation of Dreams* became the breakthrough work of Sigmund Freud's scientific career, a career that has changed not only the twentieth century's psychology paradigm, but its whole moral world.

*Die Traumdeutung* is a treatise in the area of medicine that in 1899 had been known for more than a century as psychiatry (roughly "soulcraft"), and in the last fifty years of the nineteenth century as nerve therapy or neurology. It is at once a summary of new therapeutic techniques and an introduction to a theory of why they work—a new theory of how the central nervous system meshes emotions, ideas, and imagination, and occasionally produces nonorganic or "functional" diseases like hysteria. That at least was what Freud said it was in the opening pages. *Die Traumdeutung* insists on its form as a scientific treatise, an extended argument for Freud's hypothesis that the mental activity called a dream is always, however disguised, the fulfillment of a wish.

But what are we to make of it when we learn, in the pages of a purported work of science, that its author was born with black hair, wet his bed, fought with his nephew John, and was told by his father that he would come to nothing; that in middle age he slept soundly, suffered a boil "the size of an apple" on his scrotum, lusted to be made a university professor, and not only smoked too much but even spat on the stairs?[3] Such revelations are scattered everywhere, with no regard to the chronology of a life, presented as material for interpreting dreams—for most of the dreams interpreted in *Die Traumdeutung* are Freud's own. The fact is that "the Dream" is no less an autobiography than *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* jammed with Freud's own subjective experience—his youth, his family, his career, and of course his dreams. Neither framed as autobiography nor disguised as a novel, *Die Traumdeutung* is instead dressed as science. Since it is thanks to Freud that Westerners can no longer judge a conscious act without raising the question of unconscious motive, we have Freud himself to blame if we ask about his book: why the disguise?

Was it prudery? Although Freud firmly believed in 1899 that sexual life was at the root of all neurotic disorders, he believed that he himself was cured of neurosis, and indeed he let his own sex life sink beneath the surface of *Die Traumdeutung,* with no more trace than a few hints that some of his dream-interpretations were not complete. More likely, however, is that Freud was trying to disguise not what he left out of his book but what he left in it: his ambition.[4] Sigmund Freud wanted to be a great scientist; and his dreams, insofar as he reported them in *Die Traumdeutung,* were dreams of glory.

Freud had come to science late, and he had come to it for its fist-in-



the-air promise, rather than any unalloyed intellectual pleasure he took in a particular discovery. "For eight whole years," Freud wrote in *Die Traumdeutung,* "I sat on the front bench as top of the class" at the Sperlgymnasium, one of Vienna's most competitive high schools. His best subject had been "history, in which I did brilliantly," and the few problems he had encountered were with music and math. He could have become anything from a barrister to a professor of Greek. His family had emigrated to Vienna from a "small town in Moravia," and their early poverty would have made any lucrative profession attractive; but Freud wanted more. His mother had favored him outrageously. When young he had fantasized himself as Hannibal, as Alexander and Moses, as Cromwell, Napoleon, and Napoleon's marshal, Masséna, as Schliemann, the discoverer of Troy, and even as Columbus. When he was eleven or twelve a poet in the Prater had wandered over and prophesied that "I should probably grow up to be a cabinet minister." Now forty-two, Freud was fantasizing himself as Joseph (Joseph was the Bible's interpreter of Egyptian dreams and the son, like Freud, of a patriarch named Jacob), and remembering that as a student what he had wanted above all was fundamental, philosophical knowledge. Just before he entered the University of Vienna, he had switched from law to medicine, after hearing a reading of Goethe's *Nature* and deciding that biological research seemed more likely to lead to fame and new truth than politics. It had not been easy. At the university, he wrote, "I . . . failed Forensic Medicine," and in Chemistry, which he knew was a prerequisite for the cutting edge of experimental medicine, "I worked for a long time . . . without ever becoming proficient."[5]

Once he had become a scientist, however, Freud never stopped insisting that what he was doing was good old-fashioned nineteenth-century science. He would come to compare himself with Copernicus and Kepler, Leonardo and Darwin. Stung by criticism that his system was unprovable and unscientific, he countered that his highly novel psychology was an observational science, like astronomy, where experiments were irrelevant.[6] Nevertheless, in the back of his mind (to use a pre-Freudian phrase) Freud always remained true to the earliest of all his ideals. As he explained to Fliess as "the Dream" went into print, he was "actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a *conquistador*—an adventurer, if you want it translated."[7] Near the end of his life (by which time he was comparing himself with Moses) Freud would even begin to claim that his theory was the third great blow to the naïve megalomania of mankind (after the heliocentric universe and the evolution of species), and he accepted from the novelist Arnold Zweig the judgment that what he had created "has reversed all values, it has conquered Christianity, disclosed the true Antichrist, and liberated the spirit of resurgent life from the ascetic ideal."[8]

But that was long after. In 1899, the Emperor Franz Josef's fifty-first year on the throne, Freud's approach was no more than a medical oddity. Freud had never dreamed of being a healer. He had gone into medical practice in order to have the income to found a family while he made his name in original research; and neither practice nor research had gone all that well. Freud was already past forty when his great discoveries at last began to fall into publishable order in January 1899, and the recognition he so deeply desired would not come until he was almost fifty. His neatly trimmed mustache and beard were already beginning to gray. It had been eighteen years since he had gotten his M.D. in 1881, a long apprenticeship during which he had missed at least two research opportunities and was now exploring his third borrowed therapy. The first missed opportunity, while he was still a research biologist, had been in neuroanatomy. The second had been on the effects of a brand new pharmaceutical—cocaine. The first of the three borrowed healing methods was electrotherapy, the second hypnosis. The third was Josef Breuer's "talking cure," a psychotherapy that had nothing whatsoever to do with brain structure. Here and there in *Die Traumdeutung* Freud would refer to it by the term he had first used in 1896—"Psychoanalyse." But only years afterward would it be clear that the therapy and the theory behind it were not only Freud's to name but also one of the great formative intellectual innovations of the new century.

It is hard now to imagine how easily a medical scientist like Freud could have felt himself, at the close of the nineteenth century, to be a lone hero. Histology was a science when Cajal began his work, but medicine—curing people—was at best an art. It was a scientific profession only in the laboratories of men like Ernst Brücke in Vienna ("the honored teacher of my student years"[9]) and Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière in Paris. Not only the general public, but most practicing physicians, were convinced that uninvestigated, possibly occult or spiritual factors were as likely to bring on and cure disease as any known manipulation of tissues and chemicals. It was the heyday of homeopathy and allopathy, patent medicines, healing spas, and hydrotherapy. The germ theory of infection was still new. Surgery had only recently been naturalized as a medical specialty. Psychiatry—the treatment of mental diseases—was much older; but its condition was the most problematic of all, littered with diseases like neurasthenia and hysteria whose names now mean little. Beset by the ancient mind-body problem, psychiatry was disfigured with bizarre therapies based on every conceivable approach to its solution. Practitioners were still called "alienists" and were liable to try anything. Anything might work, too, for no one had yet studied the phenomenon we call the placebo effect. The goal for Freud, who was an atheist no less "full of materialistic theories"[10] than Helmholtz and other heroes of the previous generation, was to find neurological and neuroanatomical causes for what to him were not mental or emotional problems, but "nervous disorders."[11] Jean-Martin Charcot had provided an example in 1869 when he published his painstaking proof that amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—Lou Gehrig's disease—came from the destruction of certain nerve cells and not from hysterical imaginings.



Charcot's specialty, neurology, was a branch of internal medicine, not of psychology. Psychology, in turn, was not a medical but an academic subject. Philosophical psychologists like Freud's old teacher Brentano had nothing to say about the brain; and the pioneering "scientific" psychology labs like Wilhelm Wundt's in Leipzig and William James's at Harvard had not got much beyond the measurement of "stimulus" and "response," just as neurology had not got much beyond the typical "reflex arc" of the knee-jerk, discovered in 1875. The neurophysiological question was, rather, where nerves were, what they did, and precisely how they did it. That they did it electrically had been known since DuBois-Reymond's book on "animal electricity" in 1848, and Helmholtz himself had measured an electric impulse along the nerve of a frog and found its speed to be finite. That is where Freud had started, dissecting eels in the University of Vienna's marine biology lab at Trieste, and later, under the "terrible blue eyes" of Ernst Brücke,[12] tracing the long axons of the nerve cells of lampreys (*Petromyzon*) and crayfish in the microanatomy lab. These were, he wrote, "the happiest hours of my student life."[13] "The five years which are prescribed for medical studies" were, he wrote, "too few for me. I quietly went on . . . for several more."[14]

Brain anatomy seemed the royal road to psychology in the late nineteenth century. William James's student, Gertrude Stein, had done a microanatomical study of the brain's "nucleus of Darkschewitsch" for Professor Barker at Johns Hopkins—published in 1899, as it happens, in Barker's textbook. Freud had studied neighboring parts of the brain with Darkschewitsch himself back in 1885, and planned a textbook of his own. Cajal's neurons had inspired many bright young medical researchers like Stein; and in the summer of 1899, Cajal himself was inspiring some of them directly. As Freud was finishing the last chapter of *Die Traumdeutung* in Berchtesgaden, Cajal, Forel, and Angelo Mosso were in Worcester, Massachusetts to accept their honorary degrees from Clark University and to lend luster to the new college on its tenth anniversary. Cajal's lectures explained his delicate pictures of the cerebral neurons. Auguste Forel's summarized the new neuroanatomy and reminded his American audience of the work he had done since then as director of the Burghölzli Asylum in Switzerland and as a pioneer in psychiatric hypnotism. In Worcester, which may have been a bit behind the pace of innovation in neurology, Freud was a footnote, as unknown in 1899 as Cajal himself had been in 1888. Forel mentioned Freud's *Petromyzon* dissection in his lecture and disparagingly noted the Freud-Breuer view of hysteria.[15] Cajal

was even good enough to mention one of Freud's publications of 1884, a gold chloride stain for nerve cells that was, like Cajal's own, a variation on Golgi's. Cajal was not quite generous enough, however, to credit Freud with proposing the independence of the neuron, and he did not mention the other paper Freud published in 1884 that had seemed to suggest that.[16] After all, Cajal could see Forel right there on the same dais, claiming that Wilhelm His had published the same discovery in 1886 and Forel himself in 1887.[17] No, we cannot make too much of Freud's attempt to become a Columbus of neuroanatomy. When he was finally invited to America for Clark's twentieth anniversary celebrations in 1909, it would be as the conquistador of imagination. He never made much of neuroanatomy, and he surely would have done so if he could, for his ambition was very large—large enough to invade his dreams.

Freud had been tempted away from neuroanatomy by the prospect of making his reputation with a wonder drug and getting enough money to marry on. His failure to accomplish that with cocaine was to nag at him for the rest of his life. As Freud was writing "the Dream" in 1899, the fifteen-year-old cocaine episode came up in nearly every chapter, and prominently at the very beginning of the book. To open his argument, in what is now chapter 2, Freud used a dream he had had on the night of July 23, 1895, now famous as the first dream he ever got to the bottom of. Calling it "The Dream of Irma's Injection," he reconstructed it as the book's armature—a representative interpretation of a sample dream, whose repressed theme or wish, his analysis proceeded to reveal, was to excuse his own failings as a doctor. "I had been the first," Freud wrote, "to recommend the use of cocaine, in 1885 and this recommendation had brought serious reproaches down on me. The misuse of that drug had hastened the death of a dear friend of mine. . . . I had advised him to use the drug internally only . . . but he had at once given himself cocaine injections. . . . As I have said, I had never contemplated the drug being given by injection."[18]

In discovering what the dream had disguised, Freud did not quite tear away all its masks. It was not in 1885 but in 1884 that he had become not the first but the second person to publish the news that cocaine was psychoactive and to recommend it for fatigue. (The first was Theodor Aschenbrandt, who had tested it on the Austrian army in 1883.) Freud's 1884 article had raved that cocaine was the specific antidote to that great scourge of the nineteenth century, "neurasthenia" (weak nerves), first diagnosed and described by an American doctor, Charles Beard, in 1869 (and now known not to exist). What Freud had done in 1885 was try to cure his old friend and fellow student, Fleischl-Markow, of his morphine addiction by prescribing injections (not ingestions) of cocaine as a substitute. The article he had written hailing the success of the substitution had appeared just as Freud was at Fleischl's bedside, watching him die slowly



of cocaine abuse, an agony he refrained from describing in *Die Traumdeutung* because "the sacrifice demanded of me would be too great."[19]

Freud's advocacy of cocaine was so passionate and indiscriminate that even his admiring biographer, Ernest Jones, thought he might nowadays seem "a menace to society." In addition to prescribing it for Fleischl, Freud admitted, "I was making frequent use of cocaine at that time."[20] Taking a new drug yourself was the quick way to test it, and not as unprofessional as it seems a century later. William James, who was no doctor, had begun investigating psychoactive drugs in 1870 by taking a dose of chloral hydrate, then popular in Bowery dives as "knockout drops," and had followed it over the years with self-tests of amyl nitrate, nitrous oxide (laughing gas), and peyote. In 1897, Freud would deliberately apply his own psychotherapy to himself in the famous "self-analysis." But cocaine was more than an experiment. Freud swallowed cocaine to raise his spirits, dosed himself with it to relieve migraines, and painted it on the inside of his nose with the blessings of Fliess, ignoring the possibility that it was causing the irregularity in his heartbeat, and never even suspecting that it might bring on mania or paranoia. He went further, sending doses of cocaine to his fiancée, Martha Bernays, and prescribing it for his "neurasthenic" patients. Only much later did he realize that of all the prescriptions he had made and all the uses he had suggested for cocaine, all but one were either too dangerous or too useless to remain in therapeutics. The only one that did do any good, topical anesthesia, Freud wrote, "I had not been thorough enough to pursue."[21] Attempting to inject cocaine into a single nerve to block its action, Freud's hand had not been sure enough for a conclusive experiment. Instead it was a Viennese colleague who scooped him with the news that a topical application of cocaine hydrochloride was a perfect anesthetic for eye surgery.

Fresh from the failures of cocaine, Freud had gone to Paris, "for many long years [a] goal of my longings."[22] The occasion was a travel grant he had won in the fall of 1885 to pursue his studies of brain anatomy under Charcot at the Salpêtrière asylum-*cum*-teaching hospital in Paris. In the 1880s *tout-Paris*—"all Paris"—was coming on Tuesdays and Fridays to the asylum's lecture hall to see Charcot demonstrate his remarkable discovery, "hystero-epilepsy" or *grande hystérie*. Grand, or gross, hysteria was truly spectacular, consisting of seizures, followed by contortions, paralyses, distortion or loss of the senses, fits, fainting, and foaming at the mouth. Moreover, by hypnotizing the patient or by putting pressure on her ovaries, Charcot could bring on the whole thing, in just that order, before an audience, and stop it the same way. Writers like Léon Daudet, Jules Claretie, and the Goncourt brothers were fascinated. So was the playwright Strindberg, who was mad himself at the time; and doubtless those Tuesday and Friday performances were contributing, along with cabaret, to the development of the mad monologue and the

shifting tones of the new poetry. Medically, however, Charcot presented grand hysteria as the latest and most sophisticated result of a scientific lifetime spent defining "organic" mental diseases caused by actual physical damage to the nervous system. Charcot had not yet found the damage that caused hysteria, but he had (or so he thought) the etiology down as pat as the symptoms. It was, he said, a hereditary degenerate condition a bit like epilepsy whose indicators were local losses of feeling and susceptibility to hypnotism. Grand hysteria notwithstanding, the Charcot Freud had come to see in 1885 was the world's leading neurologist, and the one who seemed to have the best chance of finding a solution to the hysterias that would finally place them with syphilitic paralysis and multiple sclerosis in the "organic" category of nervous diseases. Freud had learned hypnosis in Paris; and he was so proud to have been at the great man's feet that he named his first son Jean Martin.

But that was only three years after his trip to Paris. Now, writing *Die Traumdeutung* thirteen years later, Freud mentioned the city only twice, describing the "blissful feelings with which I first set foot on the pavement" and the pleasure of clambering "on the towers of [Notre Dame] between the monsters and the devils." In a dream he identified himself with "Gargantua . . . Rabelais' superman, [who] revenged himself . . . on the Parisians by sitting astride on Notre Dame" and urinating on them from the heights.[23] Charcot he mentioned not at all. All of Charcot's lore about grand hysteria had been dropped from medicine after the great man's death in 1893, and we now know that none of it was true. When the mind produces physical symptoms all by itself, it tends to produce what therapists expect and, in a sense, train it to do. Even a hypnotic trance, Freud had learned later in Hippolyte Bernheim's lab at Nancy, was not an indication of hysteria, but something even a non-neurotic could undergo. (August Forel had come to Nancy from Zurich in 1887 to learn the same lesson.) The only thing Freud learned in Paris that stayed with him was about sex: something he had not really thought about before (even after keeping his fiancée, Martha, waiting for four years), and something he was now going to considerable lengths to keep out of his autobiography in *Die Traumdeutung*. The root of many if not all hysterias, Charcot had said, was something sexual.

When Freud had left the brain lab of "the great Meynert, in whose footsteps I had trodden with such deep veneration,"[24] and gone finally into private practice, the object had been to end a five-year engagement by marrying his dowerless Martha. Psychoanalysis did not yet exist, so he decided to go with hypnotism as a treatment for the functional nervous diseases. For the organic ones Freud opted for electrotherapy, which stimulated the nerves in the "natural" way, electrically, by applying "faradic brushes" to the throat if you had a nervous cough or by putting live electrodes on your bare skin if you had a paralysis. And so, after spending



a good bit of precious capital on some of the impressively high-tech equipment recommended in the textbook of a highly respected electrotherapist (the knee-jerk discoverer, Dr. Wilhelm Erb), Freud had hung out his first shingle as a *Nervenarzt* (psychiatrist/neurologist) at Rathausstrasse 7, Vienna on Easter Sunday, 1886. His thirtieth birthday was in two weeks. The wedding was set for September.

The failure came more slowly this time. With electrotherapy (and later hypnosis as well) Freud had once again bet on the wrong horse. Writing up dream after dream of youthful ambition in *Die Traumdeutung,* Freud was managing to leave out the electrotherapy episode as completely as the name of Charcot—or that of Paul Möbius, who had successfully asserted that electrotherapy too worked by suggestion on the mind and not physically on the nerves. Not until he took time out in 1925 to write a conventional autobiography would Freud remind himself in writing of that third false start, and he never referred to Rathausstrasse 7, where he practiced for more than five years before moving to the apartment in Vienna's Ninth District he was to make the most famous street address in the "City of Dreams," Berggasse 19.

It was at this juncture that Freud had grasped the possibilities of a career on the model of Josef Breuer's. Dr. Breuer had managed to combine science and private practice without holding a university post. His reputation as an internist had made him family physician to the best of Vienna's medical faculty, and his reputation as a researcher had been sealed by two of the century's important discoveries in human physiology. In Freud's first year with Meynert, Breuer had "taken over the duties which my father could no longer fulfill,"[25] become a mentor to him, and had even loaned Freud considerable sums of money with no prospect of repayment, to keep him in research. In his own practice of internal medicine, Breuer had treated several patients for functional neuroses, including hysteria. One of these, Bertha Pappenheim, had led him in 1881 to a curious new therapy according to which Pappenheim would relive feelings evoked by early traumatic experiences she remembered under hypnosis. Breuer called it "analysis" followed by "abreaction" or "catharsis." Pappenheim had called it "chimney-sweeping" or *Redecur* (talking cure). We have as much reason to give her name to the therapy as we do Breuer's, for this was the famous "Anna O.," the first person in the world to undergo psychoanalysis.

Freud had been fascinated by the story when Breuer told it to him in 1882. Might this therapy work for others? Freud had tried it out on several cases. Breuer was alternately scientific and paternal. The therapy took many hours, even with hypnosis, and though Freud could use the business, Breuer had more patients than he needed. Besides, after using hypnosis from 1887 to 1889 in much the same way Breuer had, to get neurotics to reveal their traumas and to open them up to the "talking

cure," Freud had found hypnotism too controlling to evoke the truth and abandoned it for a procedure of allowing "the unconscious" to bubble up through conscious talk—something he would eventually dub "free association" and compare to reporting the sights that appear in the window of a moving train.[26]

As the number of patients mounted, Freud's mind had turned to scientific glory. Might all their hysteria cases add up to something? Together they had agreed to publish a general treatise on hysterias.

Meanwhile, as the cases came in between 1893 and 1898, Freud had become increasingly sure that all the neuroses were based on sexual dysfunction. The "neurasthenia" epidemic, he had then believed, was due to the increase in masturbation, and "anxiety neuroses" to the abstinence and *coitus interruptus* to which the rising middle class was being driven in its attempts to avoid syphilis and reduce its birth rate. As for hysterias, he thought, they came from unassimilable sexual experiences perpetrated on innocent children. Most of his papers talked relentlessly and defensively about the need to bring "sexual life" and "sexuality" into diagnostic consultation. As for Freud himself, he was a male Viennese burgher, and his thoughts about sex ran to form, especially from a man who was not much better at abstaining from sex than he was at giving up cigars. In his view, anything that got in the way of regular sex was a bad thing. For some the importance of sex was Freud's contribution to modernity; but in fact, prudery had been dying in Vienna a decade before Freud (and twenty years before Lytton Strachey said, "Semen?" at Virginia Woolf's house in Bloomsbury). "Sexology" had become a major medical topic with Krafft-Ebing, who had coined both "sadism" and "masochism" in his famous compendium of perversions, *Psychopathia Sexualis,* published in 1886 and reprinted a dozen times since. Albert Moll had coined the word "libido" in his *Libido Sexualis* in 1897. In 1899, as Freud was writing the "Dream-book," Magnus Hirschfeld was putting together the first number of a journal called *Yearbook for Sexual Deviations,* and the Cambridge University Apostles were debating "Masturbation, End or Means?" Havelock Ellis in England and Mantegazza in Italy had begun publishing sexual lore in multivolume series that would become bestsellers as the century turned. Even the sexuality of infants had already been noticed by medical research.

What sex did for Freud was provide four separate indispensable (and largely material) agencies. First, sex was the source of the chemical substance Freud believed to be the direct cause of some neuroses (the *aktuelle* neuroses). Second, sex was the constant source of the electric energy he needed to postulate so as to "cathect" (charge up) and run his theoretical nervous systems. Third, sex gave an explanation in terms of biological evolution of the peculiar kinds of symptoms neurotics displayed. Fourth



and most important, sex was the all-purpose cause behind that curious mental faculty that was to be the greatest of all of Freud's ideas, *Verdrängung*—the "repression" that put memories into an unreachable "unconscious" part of the mind.[27] In 1895 it had begun to look to Freud as if this concept of repression, which had first appeared in his writings in 1893, might be the discovery that could make him a *conquistador,* and he defended it like one. His theoretical absolutism on this point even turned away Breuer himself, though Breuer had loyally called repression "exclusively Freud's intellectual property." As Freud came to tell the story later, he would picture Breuer turning prudish, complaining that Anna O.'s remarkable sexual abreactions had once come close to wrecking his marriage, but that was a fairy tale. Breuer had simply been too careful a scientist and too eclectic a healer to commit himself to so categorical a conclusion as the sexual origin of all neuroses.

"My emotional life," Freud wrote in *Die Traumdeutung,* "has always insisted that I should have an intimate friend and a hated enemy."[28] When the first part of *Studies in Hysteria* reached print in 1893, Freud's friendship with Breuer had begun to sour, and he had already found a substitute in Wilhelm Fliess, a Berlin doctor whom Breuer had brought to his lectures in 1887. "My friend in Berlin,"[29] as Freud was calling Fliess in the book, specialized in curing his patients of "nasal reflex" neuroses by applying cocaine to and performing delicate surgery on the inside of their noses, and was in 1899 refining his "discovery" that everything in human physiology came in periods of twenty-three and twenty-eight days. The relationship with Fliess, improbable as it seems, had become by 1892 the most intimate friendship in Freud's adult life. He told Fliess everything, including the fact that he and his wife had given up sex in 1893 in order to prevent another pregnancy, and a few other things that even his wife did not know. He allowed Fliess to see things he hid from others, like his neurotic fear of trains (the same form of travel that would later provide him with his metaphor for free association). It was on Fliess's prescription that Freud had cocainized his nose and tried repeatedly to give up smoking. At least once a year the two would meet tête-à-tête to exchange ideas. Although what Fliess told Freud is largely unknown, since Freud seems to have destroyed his letters, what Freud wrote to Fliess survives: a week-to-week record of genius at work unlike anything in this era except Van Gogh's letters home.

In October 1895, Freud had sent Fliess a draft of a theory of the mind intended to yield eventually a detailed explanation of how repression could happen. He had never asked for it back. Those two notebooks we now know as Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology," the first-ever theory of nervous system operation based on the conservation of energy in and among neurones, and the first general explanation of re-

vacation that Freud was writing the final, theoretical chapter of "the Dream," in which his charged-up (*besetzt,* cathected) "neurones" of brain are irrevocably transformed into pieces of mind, and where he raises for the first time in print that imposing structure of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious that has bound the twentieth-century psyche ever since. The unconscious part of the mind is vast, says *Die Traumdeutung,* and contains multitudes, most of which are silently censored and repressed by the preconscious part. Dreaming is much more purposeful and life much less so than we thought. Nor are those purposes consistent, for not only dreams, but lapses of memory, jokes, and even slips of the tongue betray their contradiction. We are of two minds (at least) about everything, and we do not really know what we are doing. The thought would occur to Freud himself not long before he died in 1939 that his own unconscious might have fooled him into believing that his ideas were original, that he could "never be certain, in view of the wide extent of my reading in early years, whether what I took for a new creation might not be an effect of cryptomnesia."[35] As for the rest of humanity, potential analysands cannot expect to do much better than the first analyst. After *The Interpretation of Dreams,* self-knowledge becomes recursive, an infinite task undertaken against a fierce resistance that comes from the self. The human mind for Freudians is neither continuous nor whole.

The past, too, is not past but ever-present. Psychoanalysis may cure neurosis, but no nervous energy is lost, and thus no memory-trace is ever completely erased. Repression is normal, required by civilization. Perhaps that is why Sigmund Freud—the *conquistador* in an age of public modesty—insisted in 1899 that his sly autobiographical "I" was not really there, and that if it were, "I should have to give away so much of my own private character."[36]

It was not the best of private characters. Freud was wise to try to ironize and downplay his ambition, which became, when psychoanalysis finally triumphed in the years 1906–1913, intolerant, jealous, and exclusive. As Wilhelm Fliess obligingly proofread and mailed the last of the "Dream-book" galleys that September, he had no inkling that he would soon meet the same fate that Breuer had before him, and Adler, Jung, and Rank would after him, or that when Freud came to write his next autobiography in 1925, he would not even mention Fliess's name. As the 600 copies Deuticke had printed of *Die Traumdeutung* slowly sold over the next eight years, Freud would settle into his preferred role of lone ranger. There would be no more missed opportunities and no more borrowings from seniors—none he would acknowledge, at any rate—only pure and persecuted originality. Nothing less than a complete takeover of psychiatry by a band of his loyalists would satisfy his dream of glory. That dream, as it happens, came true, for Freud really was a genius and the idea of Repression one of the great ideas of the new century. Still, like



Columbus, Freud never quite realized the New World was new. Out of the heroically "objective" nineteenth-century science to which he thought he had dedicated his life, Freud had brought forth a psychology that divided the mind against itself and made "objectivity" into a wish that could be realized only in dreams.[37]

pression. It was also the first writing by Freud that included an explanation of dreams.

It was to Fliess that Freud had confided his growing conviction that the "anxiety neuroses" resulted from the repression of early sexual trauma. Fliess had independently concluded that sexual energy was the fundamental force of mind, and had no problems with Freud's insistence on a more and more exclusively sexual etiology of neurosis. Both men, too, had been collecting evidence that sex was older and more general than what happened after puberty. Like Freud, Fliess believed in Ernst Haeckel's Biogenetic Law, by which the young of every species were supposed to recapitulate the evolution of that species. A human child would, as he or she developed, recapitulate in this way the development of the whole human race. From aquatic beginnings in the womb where erotic feeling is everywhere, human children must, on this view, find sensual satisfaction first in the mouth, then in the anus and urethra, and finally in the genitals. Freud located each of his distinguishable psychoneuroses in a failure of one of these recapitulations due to sexual trauma or abuse. The overcoming of primitive stages, he had thought, was what repression had been evolutionarily designed to do. And this meant dreams were the marks of repression in all its stages. Dreams were like the mushrooms Freud so loved to hunt in the mountains on his summer vacation, arising from their hidden mycelium like the oracles of Delphi from the navel of the species.[30]

On November 2, 1896, Freud had begun to tell Fliess about his own vivid dreams. The occasion was the death of his father, Jakob Freud, "the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life." The night after the funeral Freud had dreamed of passing a sign something like a no-smoking sign that said either "You are requested to close the eyes" or "You are requested to close an eye."[31] What did it mean? He had indeed closed the eyes of his father's corpse, which was a Jewish son's traditional duty; but, thought Freud, there must be more to it than that, someone's duty to overlook something, to "close an eye" to it. Perhaps it was the duty of the rest of the family to overlook the "puritanical simplicity" of the funeral Freud and his father had wanted. Perhaps it was to overlook something else that Freud had done or something that his father had done, like the way he had soiled himself in his last illness (a sour memory that would come up in a different disguise in a later dream). Or perhaps it was something Fliess had done, and Freud's dreaming mind had displaced his father with a sort of father-figure. With the recent publication of the missing letters in the Freud-Fliess correspondence we now have evidence that Freud indeed knew something about Fliess that he was desperate to excuse or overlook: the fact that an operation Freud had asked Fliess to do on the nose of one Freud's patients had been almost fatally



botched. The patient, Emma Eckstein, had been, in fact, the Irma of "Irma's Injection" in 1895.

There is yet another possibility, which even Freud was not indiscreet enough or perhaps not yet brave enough to write about. If his current theory were true and hysteria were really due to the effects of the sexual abuse of small children by their parents and caretakers, then Freud would not only have to aver that this terrible offense was widespread; he might even have to acknowledge it in his own father. The idea had come to him early in 1897, when he had first begun to write "the Dream"—to dream it, in fact, in his famous "self-analysis." It was not pleasant to suspect his father of perversion; but there had seemed no way to close his eyes to it except by denying the whole theory, which up to that time had explained hysterical repression better than anything else. After wrestling with the dilemma for nine months, Freud had finally given up the so-called "seduction theory" that fall.[32] The would-be materialist had been left for once with nothing but psychology to go on, and only the fantasies of dream-life to make sense of. Within a few months, with the help of Fliess, he had come up for the first time with a general thory of all the neuroses based on the stages of development in the sexuality of children, and replaced child sexual abuse as the basic cause of hysteria with child sexual fantasies. Along with the new theory came the discovery of a new repressed sexual fantasy. As he put it in *Die Traumdeutung,*

> In my experience, which is already extensive . . . being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses which is formed [in childhood]. This discovery is confirmed by a legend that has come down to us from classical antiquity: a legend whose profound and universal power to move can only be understood if the hypothesis I have put forward . . . has an equally universal validity. What I have in mind is the legend of King Oedipus. . . . It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. . . . Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes . . . and after their revelation we may all of us seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood.[33]

Thus did Freud's dream of "closing the eyes" find its ultimate root in the story of a man who had torn his own eyes out. No wonder he would say of this book in 1930 that "Insight such as this falls to one's lot only once in a lifetime." The veiled self-revelation of the Oedipus insight was a crowning moment in *Die Traumdeutung* but, as Freud told Fliess in August, the whole book was designed to have the effect of climbing a concealed pass in a dark forest until it opens out on a view of the plain.[34] It was in between hikes in the mountains of Berchtesgaden during his

cluding Jews. Ternon, "Il s'agit bien d'un génocide," *L'Histoire* 187 (April 1995), 42–43.

NINE

1. Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 4 January 1899, in Freud and Fliess, *Correspondence,* ed. J. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 338.
2. Freud, "Über Deckererinnerungen" (Screen memories), *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie* 6, no. 3 (September 1899), 215–30; in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* [hereafter *StdEd,* with volume and page numbers], ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1953–1974), vol. 3.
3. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 4:136–37, 192–93, 216, 229, 230, 239, 337, 424–25.
4. Ibid., 4:249–50.
5. Ibid., 4:97, 152, 193, 196–98, 275, 398n; 5:440, 447–48, 475.
6. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures* (1932), in *StdEd,* 22:22.
7. Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1 February 1900, in Freud and Fliess, *Correspondence,* 398.
8. *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig,* ed. Ernst Freud, trans. E. and W. Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), 23.
9. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 5:481.
10. Ibid., 4:212.
11. The indispensable work on Freud's training in the materialist neuroscience of the nineteenth century and his work as a histologist and neuroanatomist is Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, The Biologist of Mind* (New York: Harper Paperback, 1983).
12. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 5:422.
13. Ibid., 4:206.
14. Ibid., 5:450.
15. Forel, in *Clark University 1889–1899 Decennial Celebration* (Worcester, Mass.: Clark University, 1899), 412–13. Forel called Breuer and Freud's a "doctrine of arrested emotions, which, unfortunately, was developed into a one-sided system."
16. Ramon y Cajal, in *Clark University 1889–1899 Decennial Celebration,* 320.
17. Forel, ibid., 410.
18. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 4:111, 115, 117.
19. Ibid., 4:206. The cocaine episode is documented conveniently in *Cocaine Papers: Sigmund Freud,* ed. R. Byck (New York: Meridian, 1974).
20. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 4:111.
21. Ibid., 4:170.
22. Ibid., 4:195.
23. Ibid., 4:195, 5:469.
24. Ibid., 5:437.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 5:527, 531. "Act as though, for instance, you were a traveller sitting next to the window of a railway carriage and describing to someone inside the carriage the changing views which you see outside." Freud, "On Beginning the Treatment," in *StdEd,* 12:135.
27. Report of Josef Breuer's discussion on 4 November 1895 of Sigmund Freud's papers, "Über Hysterie" (14, 21, 28 October), *Wiener Medizinische Presse* 36 (1895), 1717.
28. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 5:483.
29. Ibid., 5:480.
30. Ibid., 5:525.
31. Ibid., 4:318.
32. Jeffrey M. Masson has been first and foremost in advancing this view of the crucial turn in Freud's thinking. See his edition of Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, *Correspondence,* ed. J. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).
33. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 4:260, 262, 263.
34. Freud to Fliess, 6 August 1899, in Freud and Fliess, *Correspondence,* ed. J. Masson, 365.
35. Freud, *Analysis, Terminable and Interminable,* in *StdEd,* 23:245.
36. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *StdEd,* 5:453.
37. An almost Freudian uncertainty about the possibility of agreement on Freud's legacy recently (December 1995) forced the U.S. Library of Congress to cancel an exhibit on Freud. For a current snapshot of the Freudian thicket see Frederick C. Crews, *The Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute* (New York: New York Review, 1995).



TEN

1. Paula Becker to Otto Modersohn, 30 December 1899, in Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Letters and Journals* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 144.
2. Paula Becker to her parents, 1 January 1900, ibid., 151.
3. Paula Becker, *Journal,* ibid., 152.
4. Paula Becker to her sister Milly Becker, 29 February 1900, ibid., 167; to her parents, 13 April 1900, ibid., 179.
5. Though Matisse would not have been from Becker's classes at the Académie Colarossi, described in letters to Milly Becker and to Otto and Helen Modersohn, ibid., 168, 170.
6. Clara Rilke-Westhoff, "A Recollection," ibid., 173.
7. Strindberg to Claes Looström, 15 October 1883, in *Strindberg's Letters,* ed. and trans. Michael Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1:117.
8. Eugen Weber, *France, Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).
9. Paula Becker to Otto and Helen Modersohn, May 1900, in *Letters and Journals,* 186.
10. Paula Becker to her parents, 4 January 1900, ibid., 154.
11. Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 82–83.