

Part 3

THE WOLF-MAN
IN LATER LIFE

by Muriel Gardiner

Meetings with the Wolf-Man

(1938-1949)

IN the early spring of 1938, shortly after the Nazis had taken over Austria, I came face to face with the Wolf-Man on one of the busy Vienna streets. He did not greet me in his usual polite and ceremonious manner but began to cry and wring his hands and pour out a flood of words which, because of his excitement and his sobbing, were utterly unintelligible. Alarmed that he was making us conspicuous on the street, at a time when this was not only inadvisable but even dangerous, I asked him to walk the few steps with me to my apartment where we could talk in privacy. As we passed through the entrance hall of the apartment house, the concierge, attracted by the Wolf-Man's excited voice rising almost to a scream, looked suspiciously at us from his doorway.

I had known the Wolf-Man in a distant sort of way for a number of years following the completion of his analysis by Ruth Mack Brunswick. At first he and I had drunk tea together every Wednesday afternoon while he patiently tried to teach me Russian. At these meetings, after devoting a conscientious hour to Russian grammar, we would relax and talk about more interesting things: Dostoyevsky, Freud, or the French Impressionists. He knew few people with whom he could talk about these beloved subjects, and I always enjoyed and profited by his acute observations which grew out of a really deep understanding of human nature, art, and psychoanalysis.

Later, when I was studying medicine and could no longer continue the Russian lessons, he still turned up once or twice a year to renew my insurance policies, for he worked in an insurance office. We still found time to talk a little about Russian literature and psychoanalysis; then he would ceremoniously kiss my hand in an exchange of farewells, 'Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Doktor,' 'Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Doktor.'

Now, this bright April day in 1938, as I sat down in my living-room and he, unable to restrain himself, moved restlessly about, I tried to make out the words coming through his sobs and tears. At last I understood them: 'My wife has killed herself. I've just come from the cemetery. Why did she do it? Why did this have to happen to me? I always have bad luck, I'm always subject to the greatest misfortunes. What shall I do, Frau Doktor? Tell me what to do. Tell me why she killed herself.' He had come home from work one day and found his wife dead in their gas-filled kitchen. Suicides were common in the early days of Nazi Austria, as I knew first-hand from my work in pathology in the autopsy rooms of the general hospital, so of course I thought first of political motives. But this was apparently quite out of the question; neither the Wolf-Man nor his wife was Jewish and they were politically completely indifferent. To my astonishment I found that he scarcely even knew that the Nazis were in power.

This chance encounter was the first of several meetings at which he talked and talked; there was apparently no one except myself to whom he could pour out his grief and speak of his problem, which was always the same: 'Why did this have to happen to me? Why did my wife kill herself?' And though I could not answer these questions, it seemed to give him some relief to speak his thoughts aloud.

It was clear that the Wolf-Man needed help, and it was natural for both him and me to think of psychoanalysis. But the analysts had all left Vienna or were in process of leaving; furthermore, analysis itself was unacceptable to the Nazi regime, and its practice involved secrecy and personal danger. I knew that Ruth Mack Brunswick, who had left Austria for the United States shortly before the annexation, was intending to go to France and England in the summer, and I asked the Wolf-Man how he would feel about meeting her there if Dr Brunswick could take him in analysis for these summer weeks. He grasped at this suggestion as the proverbial drowning man grasps at a straw. I wrote and cabled Dr Brunswick; she replied that she would gladly see him; and then the task of making practical arrangements began.

I wonder now that I had the courage to attempt anything so seemingly impossible in the spring of 1938. To get a passport, to get permission to leave Austria, required endless visits to government offices. A visa to a foreign country was more to be desired than much fine gold. Every Consulate was beset by throngs of people whose very lives depended on their escaping from the Nazis. The Wolf-Man was in no immediate danger except the danger of being destroyed by his inner problems. He had been a member of the wealthy Russian land-owning class before the Revolution of 1917, and was now no longer a citizen of any country, but one of those forgotten thousands of persons made 'stateless' by the First World War and living a secluded and forgotten life in a Viennese tenement. In contrast to him, the Jews, the Socialists, the Communists, the Monarchists, the anti-Nazis-for-whatever-reason, good or bad, were in danger of their lives if they did not leave.

I wrote to the Freuds in London, I wrote to Princess Marie Bonaparte in Paris, I wrote to whatever personal friends I thought could help, asking them for letters and guarantees which the Consuls required before they would consider granting even a visitor's visa. When all these papers had been collected and the Wolf-Man had got a document called a Nansen passport, I went with him to the British and French Consulates to try our luck.

I remember that we met at six one morning in front of the British Consulate, or rather two blocks away, for the queue was already that long. Many people who had lined up the day before, but had not got inside the gates, had remained overnight on the street; others had come in the evening with their camp stools and blankets. It looked hopeless. Those who have seen the opera *The Consul* can picture the general frustration and despair that were characteristic of Consulates at the time, but the greatest tragedies were those of the persons who never got inside the gates at all.

I had remained in Vienna not only to complete the last few weeks of my medical course, but also because I, as an American, could be useful in helping some who were in danger to get away. So it sometimes occurred to me that this time-consuming

attempt to get two precious visas for an unpolitical Aryan, in no way suspect, was a bizarre luxury. But this was only when I was not with him. At his side, listening to his pained, obsessive questioning, I realized again that he was as much in danger of destruction from within as were my Jewish friends from Nazi brutality and the concentration camps.

Somehow it all got done, I no longer remember how. In late June I left Vienna for Paris, and a few weeks later the Wolf-Man followed.

I believe he had a daily hour with Dr Brunswick for about six weeks, first in Paris and then in London. I saw him a few times in Paris, walked with him in the Bois or along the Seine, and listened again to his tormented and tormenting question: 'Why, why, why did my wife kill herself?' There was no room for thoughts of art or architecture now, and we might as well have been tramping the noisy Spitalgasse in Vienna.

The Wolf-Man left Paris for London when Dr Brunswick did, and then returned alone to Vienna, now a sort of second capital of Germany, seething with power and brutality in those September days of the Munich Pact. The Wolf-Man did not notice any of this. A good friend of mine, Albin, to whom I had given him an introduction, made the sacrifice (for it was a sacrifice at that time) of seeing and listening to him about twice a month. Albin was at first bewildered by the Wolf-Man's unawareness and neurotic behaviour, but gradually perceived the unusual intelligence and depth of understanding shut away behind the confining wall of obsessions, and took his own way of breaking down this wall. He insisted that they play chess together and forcibly instructed the Wolf-Man in current events and matters of everyday interest. During the period of more than three years between the Munich Pact and Pearl Harbor I received occasional letters from the Wolf-Man, rather limited in content but rational and full of gratitude for the healthy support of this friend. Then the United States entered the war and all communication was at an end.

1945. The war was over. Austria and the United States were again in contact, other than the contact of guns and bombs.

Albin returned to Vienna from the eastern front and wrote me one of those long, poignant letters of 1945, telling me which of our mutual friends had died and which had survived. He had seen the Wolf-Man, who was in reasonably good physical health, and whose mental health seemed improved by the hardships of the war years. I could not help thinking of Freud's 'Additional Note' to *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, written in 1923, which comments on the Wolf-Man's state of mind and spirits after the First World War: 'Since then the patient has felt normal and has behaved unexceptionably, in spite of the war having robbed him of his home, his possessions, and all his family relationships. It may be that his very misery, by gratifying his sense of guilt, contributed to the consolidation of his recovery.'

Soon letters began to come from the Wolf-Man himself, and I wrote to him and sent him packages. His life had not changed too much. He still worked in the insurance firm and supported his old mother who lived with him. His letters indicated that he had somehow learned to accept all that had befallen him and that he was again in good contact with the world around him, though there was little in it to give him any happiness. The first letters he received from America dealt him another blow: news of the sudden, early death of Ruth Mack Brunswick.

The Wolf-Man's one recreation and joy, the sublimation on which Dr Brunswick set such store in hoping for his permanent recovery, was painting, but a contracture of the right hand made this physically impossible for long periods. Although he reviled fate that this, too, had to happen to him, he also speculated whether his need to punish himself might not be playing a part in the production of this symptom. He began to write occasional articles about philosophical problems and art seen from a psychoanalytic point of view. He did this because it interested him and also in the hope of earning a little money. His letters to me, written in excellent German, gave proof of his first-rate intellect, his clarity of expression, and more humour than I had given him credit for. They always contained an exact account of his work and health and of the few little deviations from the monotonous routine of daily life. He showed much

more personal interest than formerly in me, my work, and my growing daughter, whom he had known as a small child. He inquired about her studies, activities, and interests, and when I wrote him of her great love and knowledge of animals, he replied congratulating her on this quality. 'Nothing,' he wrote, 'can be of greater value to a young person than a love of nature and understanding of natural science, particularly animals. Animals played a large part in my childhood also. In my case they were wolves.'

In the course of these years following the end of the Second World War the Wolf-Man revealed himself to me in his letters as he never had done personally. Without our knowing it, we became friends by letter, so that when I went to Austria in the summer of 1949, I was eager to see him, not from curiosity but because I liked the orderly mind, the sensitive nature, and the humour and irony with which this lonely person faced a life which had never been kind to him. I wrote the Wolf-Man that I would be staying in Salzburg for a few weeks and would like to meet him some place between Salzburg and Vienna if he wished. He wrote back enthusiastically, proposing that we meet at Linz, about halfway between the two, and in his orderly way sending an exact schedule of the trains we should both take to arrive about the same time in the morning and leave in the evening.

He stood waiting for me in the shattered, bombed-out railway station of Linz on a beautiful Sunday morning in August 1949. Eleven hard years had passed since I had seen him but there was little change in his appearance. His tall, well-built figure was still upright, his expressive face showed resignation but no bitterness. His thick brown hair and moustache were turning grey, but I thought he looked younger than his sixty years. He greeted me with smiles and tears.

We spent the day in talking, of course, occasionally walking from a coffee house to a park bench, and then back again to a coffee-house. The Wolf-Man inquired with real interest about my family, my work, my experiences during these years, and about Dr Brunswick. He was eager to tell me his experiences, and particularly to have my opinion as to the motives and mean-

ing behind them. Considering that we had never been intimate, he was amazingly unreserved, no doubt putting me in the role of analyst, since his two analysts had died.

He had suffered perhaps less than many others under the Nazis, being neither politically interested nor interesting to them, and he had not been in an age group to have to take any active part in the war. But at the end of the war, when the Red army marched into Vienna, he, as a former Russian émigré, naturally felt endangered. However, the Russians had been busy with more immediate issues and had paid singularly little attention to him, except that they occasionally found him useful as an interpreter. As the weeks and months passed, he and his mother relaxed and thankfully accepted the fact that they were not molested. In order to come to Linz this August day, four years after the occupation, he had for the first time crossed through the Russian into the American zone, which meant applying for permission and showing his identity papers; he had felt some uneasiness about this, but it had gone off without incident.

He told me what he had hinted in his letters, that his work in the insurance office was dull and tiresome and full of petty annoyances. Furthermore he would be pensioned in another year or so, and he looked forward to this with a mixture of pleasure and dread. This led him to depend more and more on such satisfaction as he could get from painting. The periods when he had been unable to use his hand had been terribly frustrating. Now he could paint again, but for months he had been dissatisfied with everything he had produced. Only recently he had discovered the reason: he had been mixing too much brown with all his colours, muddying and dirtying them without realizing what was wrong.

The Wolf-Man spoke to me of his wife's death, which he had only very slowly and gradually learned to accept. He realized in what a desperate state he had been in the summer of 1938 and said that his hours with Dr Brunswick had really pulled him through, 'though,' he added with understanding, 'one could hardly call that a real analysis; it was more of a *Trost* [comfort, consolation].' He said that a second marriage was out of the

question for him; his age was against it, his mother's dependence on him, and his marginal financial situation. But he had been interested in more than one woman since his wife's death, and in describing these relationships to me, he asked me whether I did not think they still followed the same patterns established in his childhood by his sister's influence over him and by his attraction to the servants or peasant girls on the estate. I had to say I thought they did.

He indicated that he and his mother had grown closer. She had talked with him more about her life, the family, his childhood, and had cleared up for him some of the problems which he had never understood. He did not deny the fact that caring for his mother, now eighty-five years old, frail, and almost blind, was a burden, but it never occurred to him to question his duty or desire to carry this burden, and he spoke of her with a touching devotion. He showed me a photograph of her, and then shyly produced one of himself, taken in 1946, in which he looked haggard and emaciated, scarcely to be recognized. He explained that his mother had made him promise to show it to me, so that I might see for myself that the American food packages had really saved them from starvation.

Our six or seven hours together passed rapidly, and towards evening he took me to my train, saying good-bye more warmly than ever before. It had been a rich and rewarding day for me, and the Wolf-Man was full of happiness and gratitude for this opportunity to talk about the things that mattered, and to catch a breath of air from the wide world, from which for eleven years he had been shut off, by dictatorship, war, and the armies of the occupation.

Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man

(1956)

Introduction

THE following paper was drafted in March 1956, immediately after the meeting with the Wolf-Man which it describes. It was put into its present form in 1959, with the intention of publishing it then. When I saw the Wolf-Man soon after I had completed this paper, I told him about it but did not have the paper with me to show him. However, he did not wish it published at that time, and the matter was dropped. In September 1967, at another meeting with the Wolf-Man, I had intended to ask him whether he would now be willing to have the article appear. To my pleasure, he himself brought up the subject, expressing his wish that it be published.

I suggested to the Wolf-Man that he should write an autobiographical account of this experience with the Russians during the occupation, as it would be interesting to have it in his own words, and also for the purpose of correcting any errors I might have made. At our meeting in 1956 he had told me so much in a few hours that I feared I might have confused some of the details, although not the general mood and feelings he had described. And indeed this proved to be the case. The Wolf-Man agreed with considerable enthusiasm to write up the episode. He had by this time written several sections of his *Memoirs*.

We corresponded regularly, and in December 1967 I received a letter from him referring to this project. This long letter contains other matters also, but I shall quote it in its entirety, as it is very characteristic and tells us something about his painting and writing.

Vienna, 18 December 1967

Dear Frau Doktor:

I received your letter of 4 December 1967, and cannot possibly tell you how happy I am about everything you wrote me. And also, how grateful I am to you for sending me the honorarium for a lecture given not by me but by you, and which you had written earlier.¹ I was equally overjoyed that you sold six of my pictures and that in your opinion my last pictures are better than the earlier ones. This fact is a great encouragement to me and stimulates me to busy myself again and more intensively with painting. As you mention in your letter that the landscape with the view of Vienna and the Danube was particularly well liked, I shall paint something similar in the summer and send you the picture.

It was also a great satisfaction to me to read in your letter that my work 'Castles in Spain'² had been accepted by the *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Association for Psychoanalysis* and will appear in January or February.

I think it was a very good idea of yours - as has so often been the case - to take as the subject of your lecture at the Philadelphia Association on 27 October not my paper 'Castles in Spain' but my experience with the Russians. As I am writing so much now in my articles about Therese, and as the audience at your lecture had not the slightest idea about my experience with the Russians - or, as my mother so tellingly expressed it, 'this crazy business that no one can understand' - your last lecture on 27 October must have contained a very favourable element of surprise. Your idea of showing slides was also a very good one, as one cannot pass photos around in an auditorium, and besides slides at a lecture always increase the interest of the audience.

I congratulate you again, dear Frau Doktor, for the success of your lecture, and thank you from my heart for the [money] you sent me....

Now you tell me that (in order not to influence me) you are not sending me the text of your lecture, as you assume that I will soon write about my Russian experience, and that it will then be interesting to compare the two accounts. With this idea, I shall begin right after the holidays to write about this experience. I picture the matter

1. 'Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man', delivered to the Philadelphia Association for Psychoanalysis, 27 October 1967.

2. This is the first part of *Memoirs*, 1908.

as follows: after receiving my report, you will first of all decide whether your earlier account needs any additions, or should be altered in any way. I have already told you expressly that I agree to your writing an article about my Russian experience. Naturally I am also completely in agreement that you may publish whatever I now write. Only I would wish that, in publishing my experience with the Russians, I should not be named as the author of the article even under the pseudonym 'Wolf-Man', but rather that you, in your own name, should be indicated and named as the person who has written this work. Of course you will refer to the report given you by the 'Wolf-Man', as only in this way could you have learned of this experience. In any case I feel that the publication of two articles - one by you and one by me - would be out of the question, as two articles about the same event would certainly arouse doubt in the mind of the reader as to which one really described the affair accurately.

Now we write the year 1967 and very soon it will be 1968. But my 'meeting' with the Russians occurred in August 1951, that is, more than sixteen years ago. It was certainly a good thing that you wrote down everything I told you about it when it was still fresh. But this experience made such an impression on me that I do not think I have forgotten much. In any case a comparison of the two accounts will be very interesting.

I am glad to hear that you and your husband will be spending the Christmas holidays in Aspen with your daughter Connie's family. You will certainly be happiest there, and be able to refresh yourself in the good air and the beautiful surroundings of Aspen. I hope that this letter will still reach you before Christmas, and I again wish you and your husband and your daughter's family a Merry Christmas and everything good and beautiful in the coming year.

With warm greetings to you, your husband, and your daughter's family,
I remain,

Always gratefully yours,

*

Early the following summer, 1968, my husband was in Vienna and spent a pleasant hour with the Wolf-Man. The Wolf-Man sent me several messages, one of which was that he had not written up the episode with the Russians. He had in fact been busy with other parts of his *Memoirs*, and had also

The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud

had some periods of ill health. The Wolf-Man suggested that I send him my article, and that he would then send me any corrections or suggestions he could make. I therefore sent the Wolf-Man the second half of the paper 'Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man', that half dealing with his experience with the Russians. This paper was in English, but Professor Y. translated it orally into German for the Wolf-Man. Thereupon the Wolf-Man wrote me the letter of 23 October 1968, with the 'Short Description of the Episode of the Painting', which appears following 'Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man'. In spite of what the Wolf-Man refers to as my 'external' errors - some confusion of persons and places - I have left my article unchanged, except that I have cut out the two brief, unimportant passages of a few lines which the Wolf-Man requested to have omitted. His corrections will be seen in the letter which follows this paper.

Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man

My first return to Vienna after the war was in March 1956, a few months after the withdrawal of the Russian forces of occupation. This return to a city in which I had lived for eleven years before the Nazi annexation was a strange and sorrowful one, but still there was a breath of spring and a promise in the air after the sad long winter which Vienna had known since 1938, and the threatening autumnal storms of the preceding years.

One of the first things I did, in those few days, was to see the Wolf-Man, our first meeting since 1949 in Linz. He greeted me joyfully, eager to talk and listen and talk again. He had written me fully of the illness and death of his mother a few years previously, and also of his retirement from work; now he told me some of the more intimate circumstances of his present life.

He had few friends in a closer sense and those with whom he was most intimate all seemed to have some neurotic difficulties or character disturbance, which, perhaps along with his own, made friendship precarious. Frequently there was some complication with a woman. He told me, for instance, of a young woman, the wife of a former friend, who had fallen in love

Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man

with him. She wanted to divorce her husband and marry him. He had found this unbelievable, un-understandable, as he was sixty-nine years of age and knew himself well enough to know that he had other disadvantages. Finally the woman had told him of a former love affair she had had with an American soldier and had shown him the photograph of this young man. The Wolf-Man noticed a distinct resemblance to himself, and realized that something in the nature of transference explained her attachment to him. This bit of insight seemed to give him considerable satisfaction.

There was another woman who wanted to marry him but whom he did not want to marry, with whom he had had a difficult and involved relationship over a longer period of time. There had been several crises, and again he had undergone a period of obsessional doubts and vacillation from one position to another. He discussed his problems with every person whom he could call in any sense a friend, and with several psychiatrists and psychologists. The advice given by these different persons had run the gamut from one extreme to the other, and after talking with them he was no nearer a solution than before. He had been in a state of deep depression and inactivity, and speculated as to whether this should be called 'melancholia'. Having swung from one extreme to another, attempting first one drastic solution of his problem and then another, and having been unhappy and dissatisfied with all, he had finally made a compromise which had now continued for six months or so. This had been partly brought about by a chance meeting on the street with the woman at a time when he had broken off with her, thinking he would never see her again. Altogether I found he was much impressed by 'chance' and seemed to see fate's guiding finger in many such chance events. Perhaps this was his way of solving his own obsessional doubts and vacillations, a rather more intelligent tossing of the coin. Since making his compromise solution, he had been in better spirits, the depression had left him, and he was painting more enthusiastically than ever before. Of course he wanted my opinion as to whether he had done the right thing, and as usual I could only be very general in my comments, saying that one could probably best judge by

the result. As none of the attempted drastic solutions had satisfied him, it looked as though it was best not to force a decision, but to let it develop itself, without violence. The word violence (*Gewalt*) evidently pleased him and he seized upon it. 'That is it!' he exclaimed. 'Everything I have done with violence has been false. I cannot force my decisions.'

After telling me of several other relationships, most of which were characterized by interest on the woman's side and distinct ambivalence on the Wolf-Man's, he came to the only one which appeared to be smooth, uncomplicated, and continuing. 'I have a maid who takes as good care of me as any man could wish,' he told me. Although he did not indicate anything erotic in the relationship, I saw that it was very important to him. He felt this woman's devotion and care in all the little everyday matters of his life, and this perhaps helped him to accept the loss of his wife, and, sixteen years later, the loss of his mother. It is more usual in Austria than in America to find a woman who becomes a maid or housekeeper and puts all her heart and soul into caring for the person or persons she works for. Sometimes this is clearly a maternal love on her part, sometimes filial, and sometimes it has the quality of a deep and true friendship. I felt that there was something of each of these in this woman's devotion to the Wolf-Man.³

3. A letter, dated 5 December 1959, which I received from the Wolf-Man soon after writing this paper, throws more light on his dependence on his housekeeper:

My housekeeper, Fräulein Gaby, who recently reached the high age of seventy-five, is in increasingly poor health. She is suffering from a disease of the hipbone and, as it is incurable, all the treatments and attempted cures are of no avail. Along with this she has become moody and melancholy, and of course my own depressions do not improve when she begins to complain of her suffering and her unhappy lot, and to cry bitterly. But if I try to comfort her, this is of little help; on the contrary it upsets her still more, and she complains that no one understands her or sympathizes with her. This situation is particularly difficult for me because Fräulein G. has looked after me ever since the death of my wife, she is honest and conscientious, and has stood by me courageously under the most difficult conditions. She was also an exemplary nurse to my mother. I have depended on her for years and really appreciate her; her excellent qualities could never be replaced. But now she is repeatedly saying she is old and sick, and that I should look around for someone else to take her place as she is no longer

Since the preceding summer the Wolf-Man had again had great joy in his painting, and now he showed me a dozen or so small landscapes, urging me to take any that I liked. I wanted to accept two, but when he saw that I had difficulty in choosing from the five I liked best, he insisted that I take all five. I felt that it gave him real pleasure to give me these canvases and I accepted them gladly. He had certainly become freer in style and use of colour, and he told me in fact that for a long time previously he had been too conscientious (*gewissenhaft*) in his work. 'Conscientiousness is the enemy of art, at least of painting,' he remarked. 'One is dissatisfied, one makes a change here and another there, and suddenly finds one has lost the spontaneity and the mood, and spoiled one's colour effects by trying to be too exact.'

But, what the Wolf-Man wanted most to talk about at this first meeting after seven years was an incident with the Russian military authorities. He told me the story at length and with great feeling, and that same evening, back in my hotel room, I noted down the essentials as nearly as possible in his own words, although rendered into my English and of course greatly abbreviated. Here are the notes I made that evening of the incident which took place in the summer of 1951:

One day I took my paintbox and canvas and went out into the suburbs of Vienna, to the meadows near the canal. Suddenly the scene reminded me of Russia and my boyhood, and I was quite swept away by nostalgia. I saw a factory building that used to be Austria's largest bakery, but it looked rather deserted, or perhaps I didn't notice, I was in such a mood of the past, so enthralled by memories of my youth. I wanted to capture this scene on canvas, and took out my paints and equipment. The first thing that happened was that my painting stool broke — this was the first of several bad omens. But still nothing could stop me, and I began to paint. Clouds came up, the light changed; I painted like one possessed, not noticing anything but the scene and capable of keeping house for me. I do not even want to mention the material side and the financial disadvantage to me of her leaving, as everyone knows that it is almost impossible to find a maid in Vienna and, if one does, the wages, food, social security, insurance, etc., are sure to be terribly high. In spite of this unhappy situation I am of course trying hard to distract myself, and to keep my interest in reading alive.

the mood. After a while two figures appeared from behind the building; I paid no heed. Then five men approached me; they were Russian soldiers. I could only have been so unaware because I was living not in the present but in the past; but by the time the soldiers had seen me, it was too late. And would you believe it, Frau Doktor, although I realized it only much later, this day was the anniversary of my sister's death?

I had wandered into the Russian Zone; the Russians were using this bakery as a military station. The soldiers took me inside, took away my belt and shoelaces and my glasses and began to question me. It was at once clear that they suspected me of espionage. In vain I tried to tell them I was just painting for pleasure; they had no understanding of this. The soldiers themselves were mostly simple and decent people, but the terrible thing was that they brought in officers of the secret police, and these men know how to confuse you, torture you, and break your spirit. 'But you have a real Russian name,' the officer in charge said to me. 'How is it possible that a real Russian can work against his country?' I felt horribly guilty - a displaced guilt, no doubt, because I had never done any such thing, but they made me feel as though I had betrayed my country. At this moment I understood perfectly how the many victims of the trials in Russia signed confessions of crimes they had never committed. I would certainly have done the same. I was detained and questioned for only two and a half days, but in those two and a half days I was not only terrified (one knew of enough people in such situations who had simply disappeared and never been heard of again), but I felt a dreadful burden of moral guilt, as though I were a spy or a criminal. More and more I lost faith in myself and lost my ability to defend myself. I suffered constantly from headaches; I do anyhow, even in the most favourable circumstances. Strangely enough, I was able to sleep when there was opportunity, it was such a relief to sink into oblivion for a few minutes or hours.

Of course they looked at every scrap of paper I had with me, examined every note or telephone number, so that I had to fear I was bringing my friends into danger, too. I repeatedly told the officer in charge that I could show him my other paintings so that he might see that painting was my vocation, with no purpose other than harmless pleasure. And at length he told me I might go home and return with the paintings. I thought he would ask me to bring them the following day, or at latest in two days. But no! He ordered me to come back in twenty-one days. Can you imagine what that period of waiting was like for me? I think I developed delusions of persecution; I thought

people were talking about me or watching me when they certainly were not, though I never actually had the feeling that anyone was following me. But I simply could not think of anything else. It was like that time with my nose when I went to Dr Brunswick - only then I feared a physical deformity (*Entstellung*) and this time a moral deformity. And I did not know what to do or what to say. It seemed to me that any connections with Americans would put me in great danger, but curiously the Russians had not asked me if I had friends in America. I would not have known what to say, and I brooded constantly about how to reply to this question if they should ask me when I returned. These three weeks of waiting were the most terrible nightmare. I lost about ten pounds during that time. My poor mother, of course, was in great distress, too.

Finally (it seemed like years later) the day came when I was to return to the Russian military station with my pictures. Can you imagine the state of mind I was in? I knew I might never come out again, that this might be the end. I arrived; and no one seemed to expect me. The officer in charge who had questioned me before was not even there. Someone else took charge, and he seemed to know nothing about me, not even my name. I explained everything and showed him the pictures, and he was quite interested as he had a son who was an artist and he himself painted a little. We talked for some time about painting and he let me go, really showing no interest in my case at all.

For some time I could not believe my good fortune. I was still in fear that they would come after me. Actually only after many months during which nothing happened at all could I begin to believe that there was no more danger.

What do you think, Frau Doktor? Do you think it was my mental illness that made me take this incident so seriously?

What could I say? That there was certainly a very real basis for his fears, that any normal realistic person would have been worried and fearful in his situation. Perhaps these normal fears were made even more terrible by his neurosis; this might well be the case. I told him of a patient of mine whose neurosis had diminished his fears in similar situations of danger, a young Jew in Poland during the Nazi occupation who survived fearless and unscathed, probably only because his neurosis prompted him to move from place to place, constantly changing his identity and boldly impersonating his enemies. The Wolf-Man

The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud

was fascinated by this story and wanted to hear more details, especially my explanation of the neurotic mechanisms at work. Through his sympathy and questions I gained the impression that he was interested not only in the psychoanalytic principles involved and the comparison or contrast with himself, but also in this unknown patient of mine as a living, feeling human being. The Wolf-Man's libido now really reached out beyond himself to other living creatures, even those he did not know personally. This was something of which he would not have been capable in his more neurotic periods. In keeping with this greater reaching out was the warm interest he expressed not only in me and my work, but also in my family and friends. Naturally we could not fail to talk of Dr Brunswick; he spoke glowingly of how young, active, and energetic she had been, and of how quickly and generously she had helped him when he most needed help.

We covered much during these few hours, but it was characteristic that at the very end the Wolf-Man came back once more to the question which still haunted him, of how much his fears of the Russian secret police were realistic and to what extent they were caused by his neurosis. But the answer to this, we all know, could be found only through another analysis, with the application of all the knowledge of neurosis and reality that we possess.

Letter from the Wolf-Man

Vienna, 23 October 1968

Dear Frau Doktor:

... Professor Y. has translated orally for me your article about my experience with the Russians. This article is very good, and written in a lively style, and as a psychoanalyst you have an excellent understanding of the unconscious motives of this affair. I refer of course to that which you designate in your article as nostalgia, or homesickness. As regards the external events, I have found a few mistakes in mentioning some of the Russian characters, which are however unimportant. Nevertheless I am enclosing a short description of this episode, concerned chiefly with the external circumstances, that is,

Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man

the chronological order of events and the individual Russians. Perhaps you can find something in this description which is of use to you.

Now I would like to ask you, dear Frau Doktor, to leave out two passages in your article⁴ ...

Now there is still one point to discuss, and that is my self-reproaches after this experience.

Professor Y. told me (he had read your manuscript a second time) that in your article you indicate that I reproached myself for having acted incorrectly to the Russians in painting the house. If this was really your understanding, then it was an error. I was not painting the house itself, but the landscape spread out before me; the house was simply an accessory, just a few spots of colour slightly sketched in. Furthermore the 'house' really consisted only of a wall, in which one saw black holes instead of windows (completely bombed out). In fact, the Russians themselves finally told me that if I had asked permission they would have allowed me to paint this dilapidated old two-storey house. And no matter how well the interrogating officers understand, or rather understood, their business, they would never have been able to persuade me that painting this house could imply any danger for the Russians. The self-reproaches with which I was tortured for months following this episode were of quite a different nature. They were very similar to those of my earlier depressions (for example, the time of my nose problems, with Frau Dr Mack). Their substance was that I had lost control of myself, that I had lost hold of reality, as Freud would have interpreted it, and acted as no half-way normal person would have done. I mean, of course, that I - a Russian - went into the Russian Zone to paint.

I was sure that psychoanalysts would understand very well what had driven me into the Russian Zone - simply nostalgia and similar feelings. But what, I asked myself, would my friends say and think if I told them this stupid story? And my mother poured more oil in the fire when she spoke over and over again of this 'act of madness that no one can understand' (painting in the Russian Zone, of all places). From the psychoanalytic point of view, one could interpret these self-reproaches as a conflict between 'ego' and 'superego'. Your remark in your article about the 'moral deformity' contrasted with the 'physical' (the matter of the nose) would fit in with that particularly well.

4. He mentions two brief passages, which I have accordingly omitted. (Translator's note.)

Now I would like to touch on one more point in your article, the place where I say that now I can understand how people can confess to a crime they have not committed. I remember very well that I told you this. Naturally I do understand these cases better now, because I now know how one feels at such an interrogation. Nevertheless I believe I was then speaking too categorically. Because often these not-committed crimes are confessed at a trial in order to bring this painful examination to a close – at least for a while. Then, later, these ‘confessions’ may be retracted. Or sometimes one may admit to something because one has lost hope of ever being listened to at all . . .

I think I have now said everything I wanted to about your article about my experience with the Russians. I wonder whether these supplementary details will be of use to you . . .

With best wishes and warm greetings to you and your husband, I am,

Yours always gratefully,

*The Wolf-Man's Description of the Episode of the
Painting*

That day, when I wanted to go out and paint, I had a headache, so my mother advised me to remain at home. Nevertheless I took two headache powders and went out with my paintbox. I had intended to paint only in the district occupied by the English troops. But the English Zone was adjacent to the Russian, and I was so strongly reminded of the landscape of my home that without thinking I wandered into the Russian Zone.

At first I wanted to paint a house on which the sunlight was playing attractively. I asked somebody what house it was, and was told that it was a house for sports. If I had indeed painted this house, I feel certain that nothing unpleasant would have happened. However, I was scarcely ready to begin painting when a dark cloud covered the sun and made this subject completely uninteresting. So I packed up my painting equipment again, wanting to look for a new subject. Now I saw that I was at the foot of a steep hill, so I turned around and climbed up

this hill. From the top I saw below me a little river, and on the opposite side of the river a few quite ordinary houses, which had been damaged by bombs (there was no factory there). The dark clouds gave this landscape before me a rather romantic aspect, so I decided to paint it.

I painted undisturbed for about three hours, then packed up my things and returned in the direction of the streetcar line with which I had come out to the canal. Suddenly I found myself surrounded by five Russian soldiers, walking beside me and behind me. When we came to a spot from which I wanted to go straight ahead to the streetcar, the soldiers prevented me and forced me into a side street leading in quite a different direction. I told the soldiers now, in Russian, that I would show them my picture, so that they could see that my painting was perfectly harmless. But they replied that it was not up to them but to their superiors to judge. (In your article you write that these soldiers were friendly to me; in reality, however, it was other soldiers who were friendly, namely those who brought me my food after I was confined.)

Now I saw that there were a lot of Russian military in the place we had come to. There was said to be a Russian bakery there. None of this had been visible to me from the place where I was painting. We entered a large house or villa, where Russian officers were apparently living. I was led into a room where there were two persons, one in officer's uniform, the other in civilian clothes. Now the interrogation began, which lasted several hours. When it was over, an officer came in who was in charge of the rooms in this villa. I shall refer to him as the Commander. He led me into the basement and assigned me a room in which I was to spend the night and where I should remain until this affair was cleared up. There was a plank bed in this room, and the Commander pointed to it and said to me: ‘Lie down on the bed, don't think about anything at all, just rest.’ It wasn't really the right time or the right place to rest, but the advice was kindly meant, and I took a liking to the Commander right away.

The next day – it was Wednesday – I was taken to the officer

who, together with the man in civilian clothes, had questioned me the previous day. This officer took my statement, that is, he wrote down everything I said to justify myself during the interrogation. I remember, for instance, the sentence: 'I didn't come here to make drawings of any Russian objects, but simply to paint a beautiful picture.' As my glasses had been taken away, I could not read everything, and just made a few random checks of the written report. As these agreed with what had been read aloud to me, I signed the statement without having read it through.

The next day, Thursday, I was not summoned by anyone. Soldiers brought me my food and were quite friendly.

Friday, I was taken to the official in civilian clothes who, together with the officer, had questioned me on Tuesday. To my great astonishment he began to discuss Russian literature with me in a friendly way, and then very soon explained to me that I was not arrested but only 'detained', and that I would be released that day. He bade me farewell with the words: 'Go home and continue to live as you have been living.' Of course I was very glad; but the next moment he asked me something less pleasant, whether I wouldn't meet him in three weeks, bringing the little box with my landscapes and my personal documents. Of course I agreed.

These three weeks were a distressing time for me, as I could not decide whether I ought to go to this rendezvous or not. I talked it over with my mother, and we came to the conclusion that, as this affair had been completely cleared up, I should not be afraid to go. So I packed up my landscapes in a little suitcase and went to the assigned place in the city. I waited there almost an hour, but nobody came, so I concluded that the Russians had dismissed the case. But as I wanted to be absolutely sure that the matter was completely settled, I went the following day to see the friendly Commander and asked him to look at my pictures. I remained with him almost two hours, as he expressed great interest in my landscapes. He told me that his son was a painter and that he, too, had painted formerly. Before I left, he said to me: 'Your mistake was in not asking us if you might paint this house. If you had asked, you could have painted it

without further ado. But now it doesn't matter any more, as the business has been all cleared up.' So the whole affair was a tempest in a teapot – but still it could have turned out differently.

writes: 'I recently read a very interesting book about Augustus Caesar. Every time, when I have finished a book like this, I feel that I have been bereft of my parents [*verwaist*]. I prefer living in the past to the present – perhaps a sign of age.'

During all these years, the Wolf-Man has had health problems, old and new: the familiar catarrhs, especially of the respiratory system, rheumatism, which he put down to working for years in a completely unheated office, headaches, dental problems; and also occasional fears of future prostate trouble and glaucoma, though these fears seem based on little more than a doctor's warning of something that might occur. His depressions have been frequent and sometimes severe. They have seldom incapacitated him completely, though they have of course taken all joy out of life. At times they lasted a few weeks; at other times for months. He could not paint at these times, and when engaged in writing often either stopped or was slowed down. However, when he had to complete something urgent within a certain period, he could usually do so. And it seems that as long as he was employed in the insurance office he seldom had to be absent from work.

1948-53 was a difficult period for the Wolf-Man: he was evidently preoccupied with the problem of aging, as regards both himself and his mother. 1948 was the tenth anniversary of his wife's death – and we know that anniversaries were especially significant and poignant for the Wolf-Man. He had the idea that years containing the figure 8 were always bad years in his life.

In 1950, when he was sixty-three years old, he was forced to retire. This occurred a year and a half earlier than he had expected, owing to the great number of unemployed in Vienna at that time. So he was faced with a big change in his life, and a special reason to realize that he was growing older.

And in 1953 the Wolf-Man's mother died, at the age of eighty-nine. He had been very close to her, increasingly so since his wife's death fifteen years earlier. In his letters to me, he repeatedly spoke of 'we', meaning his mother and himself. He had at that time few other lasting close relationships except for the housekeeper, Fräulein Gaby, of whom he speaks in his

The Wolf-Man Grows Older

ALTHOUGH almost seven years elapsed between my meeting with the Wolf-Man in Linz in 1949 and our next meeting in Vienna in 1956, our correspondence has always been regular and unbroken. This has given us both pleasure. 'Because I have so many proofs of your sincere friendship,' the Wolf-Man wrote me, 'I can pour out my thoughts freely to you in every letter, and my heart feels great relief.'

In the early postwar years the Wolf-Man's letters were full of 'reality problems', as he called them: his own poor health, caring for his mother who was often ill, and above all the fight against hunger. The hunger period in Vienna lasted several years beyond the end of the Second World War. During this time there was also a shortage of fuel for heating, of clothing, and of practically all other necessities. This struggle with reality, however, did not do away with the Wolf-Man's inner problems. In one letter he writes: 'Is one not at times somehow forced to act contrary to the reality principle, so as to escape from the overwhelming pressure of the unconscious? I mean, one says to oneself, it is better to transform an inner conflict into an outer one, since it is sometimes easier to master a difficult real situation than to keep repressing certain unconscious complexes.'

Even during these early years his letters contain many references to his painting, and whole paragraphs about painting in general, about the differences between old and modern art, and occasionally about some particular painter. This has been a constant theme throughout all the years, and in the Wolf-Man's periods of ill health or depression almost every letter contains a lament that he is not able to paint. After the first years, also, there are frequent references to books he has read, sometimes briefly sketching the subject matter. Next to the Russian classics, especially Dostoyevsky, the Wolf-Man seems to have a preference for biography and historical novels. In one letter he

Memoirs, and who became still more important to him after his mother's death.

Some of the excerpts I have selected from the many letters of these years contain thoughts about growing older. Others have reference to his depressions, which the Wolf-Man himself compares to old age, because of the similar attitudes toward death — in both situations fearing death, although one does not wish to live. These letters also speak of his feelings of futility and of being superfluous.

9 July 1948

We and the rest of the world live in a state of constant agitation, and when one is advanced in age, as we are, one reacts especially intensively to everything negative.

My mother is gradually declining more and more. Even moving around in the room causes her difficulty, and she has to take hold of here a table, there a chair. Because of her very high blood pressure, one always has to be prepared that something bad might happen. Mentally, everything is fine, she is animated and interested in all that goes on in the world, but she has difficulty in reading the newspapers.

In my office, not much has changed. We still have no substitute for my colleague who died, and therefore I have to stay late in the office every day. And now, when we have too much work to do anyhow, is the time when the vacations begin. The result of all these unhappy facts is that I am in an overstrained nervous condition, which has lasted several months already and which causes me insomnia and headaches.

As our life is filled with so much more shadow than sunshine, I need not tell you, dear Frau Doktor, how we rejoice every time we receive a notice from the post office that a package from you has arrived. It gives us a feeling of security, and the realization that we are not old, alone, and abandoned.

Through the extra work at the office, my other activities have been completely paralyzed. This summer I did not once get out to enjoy nature, so free and beautiful, or to paint it. And that is something which I miss very much. You see my work in the office gives me absolutely no inner satisfaction, not even when I

have a great deal to do and when my ability there is appreciated. I inherited this restless spirit from my father, in contrast to my mother, who is more inclined to a contemplative life. Were she not, she would hardly have lived to such an advanced age, considering the many disappointments and blows of fate which she has suffered.

18 August 1948

Recently I have again had to destroy many illusions, something that is always connected with very troubled moods. Life is really not good. Perhaps this is because of my being overtired, because I still have just as much to do as formerly . . . I am at the moment a hundred per cent 'red-tape office man', just the thing which I always despised. And even if I complete my office tasks, in fact even discover a certain talent for organization of which I formerly had no idea, this does not satisfy me in any way. I have no time left to think about things which interest me personally, and I never have an opportunity to paint any more. But the worst of all is that I have even lost the desire to pick up a brush. I ask myself, what is the point of everything? My mother will probably not live much longer. And I, too, am always growing older, although, I must sadly confess, not wiser. For many years I have thought that I, through the many hard blows of fate which I have suffered, would at least in age become somewhat more mellow and would acquire some sort of philosophic outlook upon life. I thought that in old age I could at least spend my last years at a distance from the emotional struggles of which I have had so many in my life. But it seems that these are illusions also. I am still far away from the capacity for a contemplative life. Various inner problems pile up before me, which are completely disconcerting.

Theoretically, it is interesting how insidious the 'id' can be. How it can dissemble, apparently following the commands of the 'ego' and the 'superego', but in secret preparing its 'revenge' and then suddenly triumphing over these apparently higher courts. Then the old emotional conflict breaks out, and the apparently subdued mourning for the great loss which one suffered so many years ago makes itself felt again. Freud says

that the unconscious knows no time; but as a consequence the unconscious can know no growing old. These are the dangerous impulses [*Momente*] which one inwardly fears, for in such a psychic state associations, transferences, and all the other unconscious processes gain the upper hand.

Dear Frau Doktor, I hope you do not mind that I write you so openly about all these things. But you are a psychoanalyst and have in the past shown so much understanding in these matters and, in the darkest-hour of my life after the death of my wife, helped me so much. If you come to Vienna again, I hope to be able to talk with you about all these things, but now unfortunately I must be satisfied simply with indications.

Now I shall soon have my vacation; perhaps in nature's open air I shall refresh myself and be able to win back my emotional equilibrium.

4 January 1950

Now, dear Frau Doktor, this time I have to give you a piece of important news which on the one hand makes me happy and on the other hand troubles me...

As I was sixty-three years old at Christmas [I shall soon be pensioned] ... You certainly know that I have never been interested in business, and that it was not easy for me to keep at it these thirty years. At the mature age of thirty-three, I had to begin a new life in a foreign land, with a sick wife at my side. All of this after suffering such a severe neurosis, and the complete loss of the large fortune we possessed. But it was not the loss of my fortune, really, which I found painful, but rather the loss of my freedom and of the possibility of dedicating myself to some satisfying intellectual or creative activity. And now, in half a year, I shall be free again! It is certainly a relief, although the thirty years I spent in the office cannot be retrieved; and how shall one begin again at sixty-three and in such hard times?

Still, this far from pleasant dream of thirty years has come to an end. Besides, I shall be glad to be retired, because my headaches do not get better and can be alleviated only with the help of headache powders, and this can't go on forever. This is the positive side of the matter.

The negative side becomes clear only when one picks up a pencil and begins to figure accounts. Then it appears that I shall lose about one third of my present income. Aside from the question of clothes, my apartment is in a desolate condition ... And I have to think of the time when my mother will become older and more frail ... In a word, the fight for life begins again.

24 July 1950

As regards myself, also, I am aware over and over again that I shall never really recover from the loss of my wife. And I often think how lonely the evening of my life will be. These sad thoughts come more fully to my consciousness now that I have more leisure. This all contributes to the fact that I am again going through an emotional crisis and am almost always in a state of melancholy.

21 September 1950

Unfortunately I must now report that being retired from work, as I have been for the last four months, has had a catastrophic effect on my emotional state. A *taedium vitae* has taken hold of me, so that when I wake in the morning I shudder at the thought that I must get through a 'whole day', from morning to evening. Like crashing waves, then, come fits of despair, in which life seems horribly ugly, and redeeming death seems beautiful. Is this the 'melancholy of old age'? But it is really depressing to know that one approaches the last years of one's life, that one has actually accomplished nothing in life, has always had misfortunes, and finally that one is perhaps condemned to live many more years alone, without goal or purpose. What for? Perhaps it was a very sensible custom that, in the early period of human history, one took the old people out into the desert and there let them die of hunger.

23 March 1953

In my last letter I wrote you fully about my mother's condition. Unfortunately it is not a passing deterioration of health, but a 'marasmus of old age', which can only grow worse with

time. The specially sad thing is that my mother is constantly analyzing her condition, and in this way she exaggerates even insignificant things until they appear to her enormous. I wonder whether all of this should be considered a sort of mental illness, or whether it is simply natural that a person of her age and in her physical condition should sink into despair.

To be candid, I must confess that if I were in her place, I would probably not feel much better. One of her troubles is the fact that her judgment is intact, and that she is aware of the fact that in view of her advanced age she cannot be helped very much. Therefore she must expect progressive deterioration of her vision – the thing that tortures her most – along with general loss of strength. One can in her case really say that ... 'understanding creates suffering'.

It is a matter of course that this condition of my mother cannot have a favourable influence upon my moods. My headaches ... have become definitely worse ... Nevertheless I try as hard as I can to occupy myself with various things, including painting.

[The first letter from the Wolf-Man, after the death of his mother:]

12 May 1953

Although my mother's condition caused so many really difficult problems, and although her life was no longer anything but suffering, still her passing has left a great emptiness in me. I regret that just the last two years were perhaps the saddest in my mother's whole life. First, my severe depression¹ which she had to watch, and then, just when my condition had improved, the disintegration of her own powers, her illness, and then death which she had at first so wished, but then – I suppose when she felt the end was drawing nearer and nearer – so feared. And yet I believe that my mother, at the last moment, experienced death as a deliverance, for I looked at her in her coffin and could scarcely believe that death could make a human face so beautiful. For I have never before seen my mother looking

1. In 1951, following the episode with the Russian military authorities. (Translator's note.)

so sublimely quiet and peaceful, yes, almost of classic beauty.

In these years, through 1954, the Wolf-Man complained that there was no possibility of 'real' psychoanalytic treatment in Vienna. He was faced with a personal crisis about Christmas 1954 and became so depressed that he sometimes spent the whole day in bed except for a short walk when he had the strength. By summer he felt 'a new man' and was painting again. In the fall he was finally able to make contact with a psychoanalyst. The Wolf-Man felt that he did not need treatment at that time, but wanted to have the possibility in reserve, in case of another crisis. Although the analyst agreed to this, the Wolf-Man began his usual obsessive doubting as to whether he had been right in taking a 'waiting attitude'. A few weeks later he wrote to me: 'In your letter you quite rightly remark that just the knowledge that one can get therapy whenever one needs it may make the therapy unnecessary. This remark was very comforting to me, and confirmed my belief that I had made the right decision.' About one year later the Wolf-Man did seek out the analyst, and has since then had occasional help from him and later more regular help from another analyst. This help has been in the form of medication and discussion of problems, rather than actual analysis.

The Wolf-Man occasionally wrote a paper on some rather abstract subject, and had sent me one entitled 'Psychoanalysis and Free Will'. With the kind help of Paul Federn, I had attempted to publish this, but without success. When I visited Vienna early in 1957, just after the Wolf-Man's seventieth birthday, I asked him whether he had ever written anything about himself, and was greatly pleased when, a few days later, he brought me the manuscript of 'My Recollections of Sigmund Freud'. He had written this paper in late 1951, a few months after the episode with the Russians, during sleepless nights when he was 'in a state of deepest depression'. At least so he wrote me in 1957 and again in 1961. It is difficult to believe that a severely depressed person could have written this paper, but perhaps writing about his analysis and about Freud was the Wolf-Man's attempt to lift himself out of depression, an attempt

which apparently succeeded once this first step had been taken. (I saw something similar happen in the spring of 1970, when the Wolf-Man had been depressed for many months. I wrote to him then asking whether he could write a chapter about his childhood within a month, so that it might appear in this book. In his answering letter the Wolf-Man told me that he had begun to write this chapter in spite of his depression, and he did in fact mail it to me a few weeks later. When I saw him two months after this I found him no longer deeply depressed.)

In 1957 I translated a part of the Wolf-Man's 'Recollections of Sigmund Freud' under the title 'How I Came into Analysis with Freud'. I read this little paper at the annual meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in May 1957. Of course I wrote the Wolf-Man about this, and sent him a small honorarium. I also told him that the paper would probably soon be published in a psychoanalytic journal. His reply was an ecstatically happy and grateful letter: 'Since I received your letter, everything appears in a much more friendly light, because I can now assure myself that not everything I have done has been in vain. This success, for which I have to thank you, justifies your opinion that my personal experiences can arouse much more general interest than my papers of a popularizing or theorizing character . . . But so long as one has no success, one has not the energy to struggle and convert this sensible idea into a deed. Now it will be different.' And from his next letter: 'I regard your success . . . which makes me so happy, as fate's signal of the direction I should take . . .'

I had been urging the Wolf-Man to write about himself, and now, following 'fate's signal', he began to do so. The first section which he worked on was *Memoirs, 1914-1919*. On 22 September 1958, he wrote me that he had not progressed as fast as he had hoped. 'Partly my depressions have been to blame, partly however something else. As I began writing it seemed to me necessary, for the better understanding of the characters and situations, to go more deeply into various things than I had originally intended, as, for example, my sister's suicide, where and how I met my wife, more about Dr D., who played such an important role in my life and who was such a curious character,

etc. So I always had to squeeze in new sections. I also had to mention the Russian Revolution, and the occupation of Odessa by foreign powers. So my *Memoirs*, although I tried so hard to make them as concise as possible, have taken on a greater size than I originally wanted. One might call them something like a short family novel.'

Finally on 10 December 1958, when the manuscript was completed, he wrote me again: 'As I have recently been intensely concerned with literary tasks and had a definite goal in mind, this has had a good influence on my emotional state and has clearly helped me, for which I am most grateful to you. Now I would like to mention that I finally came to the conclusion that memoirs of actual experiences are quite different from a novel, and therefore one should not confuse the style of one with the style of the other. So I have kept myself down to reality, without mingling poetry with truth [*Dichtung und Wahrheit*], and without ornamenting truth with fantasy. Also I have given preference to the "epic" element, rather than the sentimental or the theatrical, for - as I imagine - it is more in keeping with Anglo-Saxon taste, and also with my own. I have also given some space to Dr D., since, as far as I know, the English and I presume also the Americans enjoy a bit of dry humour, and in their literature often depict a harmless eccentric, such as Dr D. actually was. Furthermore, he was a piece of psychoanalysis and on this account also deserves mention.'

Since this time, the Wolf-Man's writing has been one of the chief subjects of his letters and also of our conversations during my eight visits to Vienna between 1960 and 1970. He has told me repeatedly that writing gave a point and purpose to his life.

However, all the former themes also continued in his letters and our talks. In conversation the Wolf-Man is lively, entertaining, and often dramatic. He is always searching for meaning and motive in personal conduct, his own or that of his friends. His great gift of storytelling and of portrayal of character, although more evident in conversation than in writing, is not missing from his letters. I quote a characteristic passage from a letter of 4 April 1960: 'I have told you about the painter with

whom I am friendly. He is certainly a well-educated and gifted man, but he has such an unusual personality and such a high opinion of himself that this borders on megalomania. He is forty-five years of age, and until now has lived on the pension of his mother, who was a teacher. All his acquaintances and he himself anticipated with terror the moment when his mother would die and he would be destitute. Now this moment has unfortunately arrived. Two weeks ago there was nothing to indicate that anything serious could happen to his mother. Several days later I went to his house and found a note on the door, quite characteristic of him: "Mother is in hospital; I am in the tavern across the street." A few days ago she died, apparently from a ruptured peptic ulcer. The relationship between mother and son was extremely close and tender; both of them even slept in one small room although their apartment consisted of two large and two small rooms. So now one might expect the son to have a complete emotional breakdown. Astonishingly enough, there is nothing of the kind to be seen. He behaves as though nothing in particular had happened. It seems especially strange that he is apparently not conscious of his catastrophic material situation, and wants to continue playing the role of the great gentleman.'

The Wolf-Man wrote me often about this friend and others, both men and women, and the many vicissitudes of his relationships with them. He also always inquired about mutual friends and about my family and my work, and responded thoughtfully to whatever I wrote to him. On 6 December 1962, he commented on my work as psychiatric consultant in schools. 'I fully agree that one can best combat neuroses and mental illness when one takes hold of them at the time of their formation in childhood. When one tries to reconstruct a childhood neurosis after twenty or thirty or more years, one must depend on circumstantial evidence. From legal practice one knows how often circumstantial evidence can lead to false conclusions, since one is forced to deduce cause from results. But the same facts could lead back to various causes, or, respectively, arise from various circumstances, which people are all too prone to forget. Aside from this, it must be much easier to treat an emotional

illness successfully at the time it comes into being than decades later when all kinds of abnormalities have been consolidated and, in a sense, have become second nature to the neurotic.' Elsewhere the Wolf-Man writes: 'I too am very interested in childhood neuroses, and especially in my own. For, on the one hand, these early emotional disturbances contain so much that is puzzling, and on the other hand they are so illuminating as regards later neurosis.'

Except for these remarks there are few references to his childhood in the Wolf-Man's letters, but one interesting letter, written, like those quoted above, in reply to something I had told him about myself, fills a little gap in his 'Recollections of My Childhood':

6 July 1963

I remember very well how in my childhood I racked my brains over the problem of how children come into the world. My sister and I talked about it a great deal and even made a pact that whoever would be first to learn the solution of this riddle would immediately tell the other. My sister later told me that she had talked about this with our little cousin's nurse, who had explained everything to her, but that she could not possibly let me into this secret. I was terribly disappointed but my sister stuck to this, so it was not until I entered the *Gymnasium*² that I was enlightened about all these matters by my fellow students.

Until the Wolf-Man began his *Memoirs* he seemed almost to avoid mentioning not only his childhood but his past altogether, except for the death of his wife. He occasionally referred to matters with which he knew I was familiar, such as his sister's suicide, his analysis, and his return to Vienna at the end of the First World War. But he told me little about his former life, not even, for instance, the name of his sister or wife. His talk was mostly about current personal problems or the immediate past, though not limited to the personal and concrete, for he was always interested in the arts and in everything relating to

2. At about twelve years of age. (Translator's note.)

psychoanalysis. But he seemed to have only limited interest in certain fields of general concern, particularly political matters and international problems. At the time of his wife's death, I considered this unawareness a result of his being completely engrossed in his tragedy to the exclusion of every other interest. This lack of concern, however, was not restricted to the period of his wife's death, but was evident earlier and also later. His *Memoirs, 1914-1919*, contain little about the world-shaking events of those fateful years. It is true that I had urged the Wolf-Man to write a personal narrative and that this was his intention; nevertheless many people in their personal narratives would find it difficult to disregard national and world events to the extent the Wolf-Man does. This relative disregard spreads even to the effect of these events upon his personal life. One searches in vain for any complaint about the Russian Revolution or the loss of his fortune. The Wolf-Man once told me that Freud and others had been surprised that this change from great wealth to poverty had meant so little to him. 'This was because it was something that simply *happened* to me,' he explained. 'I was not responsible for it; I did not have to worry whether I had done something wrong; I did not have to feel guilty. We Russians are like that. We all adapted ourselves fairly easily, took any job we could get, and were not overwhelmed.' I agreed with him that this was indeed true of all the Russian émigrés I had known. The Wolf-Man's comparative indifference to world events still held true after 1938 (except that one cannot be indifferent to starvation). He made few allusions to the Cold War or the Hungarian Revolution, much less to the upheavals in Africa or elsewhere. But in recent years I have noticed a difference. His letters and conversation contain more references to what goes on in the world, and he occasionally mentions a book he had read about Austria or the Near East or even Vietnam.

This is one of the signs of subtle change in the Wolf-Man which I have become aware of in the last years. I cannot say when it began, or just what this change consists in, other than a widening of interests and a somewhat more hopeful – or less hopeless – attitude. Perhaps I noticed something of the sort in

his letters after 1957, when he was so overjoyed about his first publication in a psychoanalytic journal and began to feel that his life now had a purpose. Furthermore he had at that time been seeing an analyst at least occasionally for about a year; perhaps this was helping him. My first meeting with the Wolf-Man after 1957 was in the spring of 1960, when I found him in good health and good spirits. This improvement was by no means constant, and the Wolf-Man has had several depressions since then. Nevertheless I believe his state of mind has been, on the whole, healthier.

In March 1963, when I was planning a paper on 'Psychoanalytic Considerations of Old Age' for a panel at the annual meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, I wrote to the Wolf-Man asking him certain questions about his attitude towards growing older, and requesting his permission to publish this material. I shall quote his long, characteristic answer word for word. As was to be foreseen, his answers to my questions do not tell us as much as the spontaneous remarks I invited him to make.

23 March 1963

As to your request that I answer the questions in your letter, naturally I am very glad to comply with your wish and I shall be very happy if you can make use of this information . . . So I shall begin immediately to answer your questions.

1st question: Have there been any changes in your dreams, and of what kind?

Answer: I notice no change in the content. Perhaps they have become somewhat less plastic. What strikes me, however, is the fact that I forget them more quickly than I did, and for this reason probably, in spite of their existence, often believe that I have not dreamed at all.

2nd question: Have you the feeling that your libidinal life has changed, or that your wishes or fantasies have changed?

Answer: My wishes and fantasies of a libidinal nature seem not to have changed; but my libido has, during the last three or four years, lost intensity, so that everything sexual is definitely weaker and no longer plays the role it formerly did.

3rd question: Have your drives (sexual, aggressive) become stronger or weaker? Since when?

Answer: As regards the sexual drive, I have replied above. But my aggressive drives, in contrast to the sexual, seem to be stronger rather than weaker.

4th question: Have you new conflicts? Have you still old conflicts? Stronger or weaker?

Answer: The conflicts are still the same, with the exception of my hypochondria, which has noticeably lessened (since the death of my wife). As regards my other conflicts, they are less acute than formerly but instead have a more chronic character.

5th question: Have you become more or less narcissistic?

Answer: In a positive sense, less narcissistic, because one is no longer so vain in old age as in youth. One bothers less about one's appearance and similar things. But in a negative sense, one's narcissism has increased, as one has become more sensitive to any criticism of one's person, suspecting that it contains references to the signs and shortcomings of age, of which one does not wish to be reminded.

6th question: Have you noticed any signs of regression?

Answer: I am not aware of any signs of regression in myself.

7th question: Has your life become more or less harmonious? In what respects?

Answer: Definitely less harmonious. With increasing age, interest in life grows less, and therefore interest in the world around one and its manifestations lessens also. All our goals are subject to the limitations of time, and the time which remains to one, or which one can hope for, becomes ever smaller and shorter. What is there left to wish for? More and more also one loses the ability to comfort oneself with illusions. So it is with me, for example, as regards my ability to delight in the beauty of nature. Formerly, I was often so enchanted by a landscape that I sometimes felt an almost irresistible urge to paint this landscape as soon as possible. But now I notice that I am more and more losing this ability to be so enthusiastic about a landscape. Added to this is the deterioration of one's physical strength; one becomes quickly tired on such nature excursions,

carrying a heavy paintbox and other equipment, and this reduces one's delight in nature and art.

8th question: What are the most important inner and outer changes in your life?

Answer: Outwardly little has changed since the death of my wife and my mother, and since my retirement. However, my housekeeper, a woman who lives in the same apartment building as I and who has kept house for me since the death of my wife, has for several years been suffering from a serious deformation and chronic inflammation of the left hip, the consequence of which was that I was obliged to engage a maid. And I must say I was lucky to find a helper at all, as it is almost impossible to find anyone in Vienna.

As regards inner changes, under question 7 I have indicated how one's interest in life decreases with age. In connection with this, I would like to mention that in my youth and middle age, no matter how severe my psychic depression was, it was never accompanied by physical symptoms. Even after the death of my wife, when the emotional pain was so great, my symptoms were purely psychic and not physical. But when, in the year 1951, I again suffered from a strong depression, I felt physically so weak and tired that I often spent the entire day in bed. And my very severe depression in 1955 was also accompanied by physical exhaustion.

And now, dear Frau Doktor, as you ask me in your letter to write you my further observations and conclusions in regard to growing older, I would like to add the following remarks.

One often hears the opinion that, as one grows older, one lives chiefly in one's children and grandchildren. I believe there is a great deal of truth in this, as the possibilities of one's own ego become limited in all directions in old age, and one therefore feels the need of enlarging and enriching this impoverished ego through one's descendants. When such an enlargement, or living on, in one's children is lacking, one feels especially lonely and forlorn. With those who have never practised a profession, an additional difficulty is a much stronger feeling of being superfluous after retirement, which I have experienced also.

I have often been puzzled by the fact that, in a deep emotional depression, one does not want to live, but nevertheless fears death. When one is healthy, on the contrary, one wants to live, but feels no fear of death. At least this has been so in my case, and I am experiencing something similar in growing older. Life has lost much of its charm and therefore much of its value; one's thoughts hover around the problem of death, which one fears more in age than in youth. One sees this from the fact that in age one is much more cautious and anxious, not nearly so bold as in youth. It is, however, rather obvious that one should be more preoccupied with death in old age, as death comes closer.

Furthermore, I think that the problem of aging depends very much on the individual. My mother, for instance, told me that she was happier in old age than in her youth, although she had lost her entire fortune and lived, as an older woman, in poor surroundings and among strangers. Her relatives, to whom she was deeply attached, either remained in Russia or had died. All very unfortunate circumstances. But in her youth she had suffered rather a lot with my father, and with many unpleasant events in her family, whereas in age she could live a quiet and contemplative life to which she had always been inclined. So she worked out for herself a philosophy that suited her nature, and she was much more satisfied than in her youth or middle age. After all, in youth one asks more of life than in old age, and must therefore experience many disappointments.

It is not uninteresting that earlier my mother suffered markedly from a severe hypochondria, which, however, disappeared completely after her sixtieth year. But then, when she was about eighty-five and had to undergo an eye operation (glaucoma), it returned. As the medical director of the hospital told me, Professor Pilat, Chief of the Vienna Ophthalmological Clinic, who performed the operation, considered it so successful that he used to describe it to his students. But my mother was so dissatisfied with the results of this operation that she always spoke of it as a failure. As the other eye remained completely intact, there was of course no question of 'having become blind'; nevertheless my mother complained of the worsening of her vision after the

operation, and her daily lament was always: 'Yesterday I could see everything, but today nothing at all.' Except for these hypochondriacal symptoms, she was mentally perfectly normal until her eighty-eighth year, and only in the last year of her life - she died at eighty-nine - her mental powers also declined, so that, for example, she often confused me with other persons.

To complete the above remarks, I shall add that I was born 24 December 1886, Old Style (Julian calendar), or 6 January 1887, New Style (Gregorian calendar).

The Wolf-Man ends this letter, appropriately, by giving us, with his usual exactness, the most important date in his life, that of his birth.

The Wolf-Man's observation about the need to enrich one's impoverished ego in old age, by living on in one's children and grandchildren, is one I have often heard him make. He has always been convinced that having children would have made a tremendous difference in his life and happiness, and has spoken of his regret that his wife was unable to bear children. He always wanted to hear about my daughter and grandchildren, their personalities and their interests, asked me several times for photographs of them, and envied me my vacations spent with them.

An interesting point in this letter is the statement that his hypochondria has noticeably lessened since the death of his wife. His wife's death, of course, marks a point in time, but one wonders whether it is also unconsciously given as a reason. Perhaps the Wolf-Man no longer needed his hypochondria after being overwhelmed by the tragedy of his wife's suicide; he may simply have needed suffering, regardless of the kind.

His feeling of being 'superfluous' is another theme the Wolf-Man often touched on. He wrote to me once: 'Your life is filled with work which brings help and comfort to your fellow men. This must give you great satisfaction. I think indeed that the deeper cause of every neurosis and every depression must be the lack of relationship to the world around one, and the emptiness which results from this.'

Analysts have wondered that the Wolf-Man, after his emigra-

tion to Austria in 1919 and the loss of everything he possessed, was not able to find work which would have made it possible for him not to feel superfluous, work more satisfying and rewarding both intellectually and financially. Some have put this down to the Wolf-Man's passivity and masochism. Whether or not these played a role, I am convinced it would have been impossible for a foreigner, trained only in law, to have found such a job in Vienna in the 1920's. The inflation and unemployment were staggering. The Wolf-Man did have work in which he was gradually promoted and in which he could even use some of his legal training, and though he did not find it satisfying, he had no alternative. Outside of work hours he painted, at times gave lessons, and wrote a number of articles. He sold a few articles and a few pictures, but they brought in pitifully little money. They did, however, give a modicum of satisfaction to his intellectual and creative drives.

After the Wolf-Man completed his *Memoirs, 1914-1919* in December 1958, he began to think about continuing them. The theme he chose was his wife's suicide. This would have to be preceded by the story of how he met Therese, and this in turn by what led up to his going to the sanatorium in Munich. In late 1961 all was still rather nebulous in his mind, as one sees from a letter of 12 December of that year: 'My recollections of the death of my wife . . . will consist of three chapters: my journey to the Caucasus after the death of my sister Anna, the period in St Petersburg, and only after that getting to know Therese, and Therese's suicide. I have made a first draft of the first and second parts . . . I recently looked this over and was fairly satisfied with the St Petersburg period . . . But as regards the Caucasus journey, I had the feeling in reading it over that this section has no real organic and natural connection with the principal theme, Therese.'

Six months later the Wolf-Man had completed *Memoirs, 1905-1908*, and wrote me suggesting several possible titles for this section. 'One could call it "Unconscious Mourning", as my mourning after the death of my sister was so completely different from that following Therese's suicide . . . Or one could consider this whole section as simply the first and second parts of

the complete work "Castles in Spain" . . . The present memoirs are thought of as a prelude to the principal theme of my wife's suicide.'

Although the Wolf-Man had already written about the years 1914-19, it is interesting that he did not think of the years between 1919 and 1938 as belonging to his story. They were quiet and undramatic years except for the brief period of his analysis with Dr Brunswick, which he knew she had reported on. He wrote the *Memoirs, 1905-1908, Memoirs, 1908* (originally in two parts), and *Memoirs, 1909-1914*, in chronological order, between 1961 and July 1968.

The Wolf-Man had given me many of his small oil paintings of landscapes, over the years, and I sometimes showed them to my students or colleagues. In the fall of 1963 some of them asked whether it would be possible to buy these pictures. I was not willing to part with any the Wolf-Man had given me, but I wrote to him asking whether he had others he would sell. He was delighted with the prospect. 'How can I thank you, dear Frau Doktor, for the excellent idea of showing my landscapes at your lecture? Of course I gratefully accept your proposal to send my pictures for you to sell in the United States. You can easily imagine how happy I am to turn my landscapes to account in this way.'

The modest income from the pictures was very welcome to the Wolf-Man, but more important was the feeling that his painting was appreciated and was of interest to psychoanalysts. At the request of one analyst he painted the wolf scene from his childhood dream, in oils. I liked it so much that I asked him to duplicate it for me. It affected me as it did Professor Y.,³ who, the Wolf-Man wrote me, found it 'threatening and really like a bad dream'. The sale of the pictures has continued to be a satisfaction to the Wolf-Man.

By the time the Wolf-Man started writing *Memoirs, 1908* he had begun to write more freely and personally about himself than in the two previously written chapters. It is not only the subject matter which makes this section more interesting, but rather the emotion that goes into the writing. In the memoirs

3. The psychoanalyst the Wolf-Man was seeing.

written earlier we are introduced to the Wolf-Man's home, his family, his companions, and of course to himself, but he does not really show himself to the reader. He writes *about* himself, even meticulously describing his moods and emotions, but he is often more of a shadow than a living, feeling human being. In 'Castles in Spain' the Wolf-Man comes to life. We are already familiar, from the earlier papers, with his melancholy and his turbulent mood-swings. These come out strongly in *Memoirs*, 1908, but here is something else with which we are less familiar: his boldness, energy, and decisiveness in the service of his desires.

The setting, a sanatorium for wealthy Europeans of the pre-First World War era, is convincingly real. Only Therese, moving noiselessly and devotedly through this sick society, is a little mysterious, and so indeed she seemed to the Wolf-Man himself and to the other patients. Mysterious, but alive, beautiful and womanly. The Wolf-Man has succeeded here in giving us a portrait of the woman who was to become his wife and of himself as a young and ardent lover, against the background of a vanished society of more than half a century ago.

From 1968 until spring 1969 the Wolf-Man worked on his *Memoirs*, 1938 recounting Therese's suicide, the tragic climax to which, apparently, he felt his previous life was only a prelude. He had just completed this chapter when I saw him in Vienna on 30 March 1969. Now eighty-two years of age, the Wolf-Man seemed in fairly good health physically, but thin, worried, and mildly depressed. It was obvious – and of course the Wolf-Man himself was aware of this – that writing this deeply personal and painful chapter of his *Memoirs* during the preceding months had contributed to his depression. One feels, in reading his moving account of his wife's suicide, that he must have relived every anguished hour in the writing. Remembering my meetings with the Wolf-Man after Therese's death, I can confirm what he writes about his feelings and attitude at that time – except that he was then perhaps even more distraught than appears from the *Memoirs*.

In our meeting on 30 March we talked for a couple of hours about the Wolf-Man's writing and painting, about his emo-

ional and physical health, and about his future. He was worried about his elderly housekeeper, the same faithful Fräulein Gaby who makes her appearance in these *Memoirs*, who could now hardly walk. The Wolf-Man, realizing that she might soon have to go into an old people's home, was trying to face the fact that he might then have to do the same. He seemed unable to accept this, saying he could not afford a tolerable one, and that in fact there were no homes where he could still have his freedom and privacy and be able to paint. As I knew that there were a number of homes in Vienna where he would have privacy, comfort, and freedom, and as I believed that his essentially sociable nature would respond and thrive in the company of others rather than the comparative solitude he was used to, I tried to persuade him to visit several homes with a view to planning his future – but without success.

The Wolf-Man's depression at this time was not extreme. Mentally he was alert as ever; apparently his thinking had not slowed down, although he had some difficulty in forcing himself to write or paint. We said good-bye on Sunday, 30 March, after a good and friendly talk. The next morning – my last day in Vienna – he telephoned asking whether it would be possible to see me for a few minutes to clarify something we had talked of the preceding day, about which he had had some afterthoughts. We met and settled the problem over coffee that afternoon of 31 March, just before I left for the airport. It was only later that I realized that this day was the thirty-first anniversary of Therese's death.

When I asked the Wolf-Man by letter, some months later, whether he had visited any homes for the elderly, he replied that he had not, giving his reasons. 'My housekeeper is now eighty-five years old and suffers from a very severe and painful ... disease of the hip. She can move about in her apartment, a half floor below mine, only by holding on to the furniture. She has not left her home in eight years, and lives like a prisoner in a prison. It is no wonder, under these circumstances, that she is subject to severe depressions. Another woman would have been in the Lainzer Home for Old People long ago, but Fräulein Gaby will not hear of it. She has spent her entire life work-

ing for others and feels a great sense of duty. So her constant complaint is how much she would like to work but . . . how little she can do for me. Nevertheless she manages to cook my midday meal and to look after my home a little. I have to thank her, too, for finding me a maid who comes once a week to clean . . . Through this activity, Fräulein Gaby, who is perfectly healthy except for her disease of the hip, has at least the feeling that she is still taking care of somebody and that her life still has meaning. Were I to go into a home for the elderly now, she would be very much hurt. So I have decided that as long as Fräulein Gaby continues more or less the same, I shall not give up my apartment. Certainly the sight of anyone as sick as Fräulein Gaby is not a happy one, but what is there to be done in such a case?' The letter continues, mentioning the practical problems that would arise if he left his apartment, and the difficulty or impossibility of painting in an old people's home.

Another letter written about the same time contains further reflections on growing older. 'I am very happy that I could finally conclude my *Memoirs*, as at my age one has to reckon with every possibility, so I was always afraid that something could happen to prevent my finishing them. It is natural, of course, that at my advanced age one often thinks of the illnesses of age that could suddenly appear, and of the approaching end, and is in general very preoccupied with thoughts of death. I am especially oppressed by the fact that in recent years I have lost more than twenty pounds and suffer from loss of appetite so that I can hardly hope to regain my normal weight . . . It is interesting that you write me that your Russian friend, although ninety-five years old, nevertheless feels strong and continues working as a sculptor. I am acquainted with a . . . [woman] of eighty-eight, and when I asked her whether she felt old, she denied this. Evidently feeling old is a very individual affair.'

On 20 September 1969, the Wolf-Man wrote me: 'Now you ask me, dear Frau Doktor, whether I could write something about my childhood. This question is very welcome, as since finishing the chapter about Therese's suicide and having nothing more to write, I have felt a certain inward emptiness. Besides

you are quite right that memoirs are incomplete without recollections of childhood; this is the more true in my case as so little is known in the United States about life in southern Russia at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.'

Because of depression during the following winter, the Wolf-Man was not able to begin this work which he had felt he would welcome. In the spring of 1970 I wrote him that this book, including his *Memoirs*, would soon be published by Basic Books, with or without the chapter on his childhood. If he could send this chapter to me within a month, I could translate it in time for it to appear in the book. He was overjoyed that the book had been accepted for publication, saying 'everything you write me about the book far exceeds all my hopes and expectations.' On 4 May, exactly one month after my letter to him, the Wolf-Man wrote me: 'Your dear letter of 4 April was so encouraging that I decided to write my "Recollections of My Childhood" in spite of my depression which was this time, for various reasons including, I suppose, my advanced age, especially obstinate . . . I mailed this chapter to you on 30 April . . . I had shown it to Professor Y., who liked it very much and felt that without it there would have been a considerable gap in my *Memoirs* and they would have lost a lot. I am very glad that this time I succeeded, in spite of my depression, in writing this chapter so quickly.'

When I saw the Wolf-Man soon after this he appeared to have recovered somewhat from his depression, but was suffering from obsessional doubts accompanied by anxiety. He was indeed happy about the forthcoming book, but worried and vacillating about many things. He looked older and more frail than at our previous meeting in March 1969, but was mentally completely alert. He could talk of little except the book, which was perhaps natural as there was much to discuss, but his talk had a somewhat obsessive and repetitive quality. I pointed out that there was a long gap in the *Memoirs*, from 1919 to 1938. The Wolf-Man agreed to write a chapter about this period. This brief section, about the healthier and more serene years of his

life, did not cost him the same effort as the childhood chapter.⁴

It was only after I received the 'Recollections of My Childhood' that I realized that the Wolf-Man had, for the second time, been faced with a 'time-limit'. This time, too, as with the incomparably more important time-limit in his analysis with Freud, he rose to the occasion.

4. In October 1970 our mutual friend Albin, who had been living in the United States since 1954, visited Vienna and saw the Wolf-Man. Albin told me that, although the Wolf-Man did not immediately recognize him owing to the changes that may occur during sixteen years, he would have recognized the Wolf-Man anywhere. 'He has hardly changed,' Albin said, 'except that he is thinner. He seemed mentally and physically just about the way he was before I left Austria, with all the same ups and downs. He complained chiefly of headaches. And he is feeling a certain emptiness in his life now that he has completed his *Memoirs*. It would be good if he could go on writing. We spent a very pleasant, interesting evening together.'

Diagnostic Impressions

'WHAT has happened to the Wolf-Man?' friends often ask me. 'What is he like? Is he healthy? Is he psychotic? What did his analyses with Freud and with Ruth Mack Brunswick achieve?'

To give a true picture of the Wolf-Man's personality, I must describe him in both his more healthy and his less healthy periods. From the time I first met the Wolf-Man in 1927 until his wife's death in 1938 I had never observed anything that I considered abnormal in his behaviour or conversation. He made a most orderly and reliable impression, was always appropriately and carefully dressed, was very polite and considerate of others. He was an excellent conversationalist; however we talked little about ourselves, chiefly about art and literature and psychoanalysis. He was a conscientious teacher of the Russian language although he expected a bit too much of me. His German, our common language, was excellent, mine rather inadequate. I remember struggling with the Russian for such words as *Kolonialwarengeschäft*, not having the slightest idea of what the German word meant.

When I saw the Wolf-Man in 1938 after his wife's suicide, as both he and I have reported, his behaviour, his talk, and his relationship to me were completely changed. He could talk and think of nothing but himself, his wife's death, and the cruelty of fate. From this time on, he has to some extent placed me in the role of analyst as well as advisor and friend. I think he has let me see all his moods, with no attempt at distortion. However, in the Wolf-Man's letters the greatest emphasis is usually on his misfortunes and problems. Just as when a child at camp or boarding school writes home about the bad food or the rain, about this mean boy or that stupid teacher, rather than about all the fun and the interesting things to do or to learn, so the Wolf-Man, writing freely to a substitute analyst, naturally stresses the negative far more than the positive.

The Wolf-Man is an interesting and attractive man, now

elderly but still looking and seeming much younger than his years. In his more healthy periods he is sociable and outgoing, frankly interested in himself and also in others, with an apparent tolerance of their harmless – or even not so harmless – eccentricities. Perhaps this is a Russian trait. (Both Freud and Dr Brunswick mentioned their patient's Russian characteristics.) One need only think of the Wolf-Man's family's attitude towards W. and the fata morgana of the artesian wells. No one seemed to mind that the idea of the wells simply vanished. Instead, with the truly magnanimous politeness which Dostoyevsky's characters so often show, they accepted W. on his own terms, never showing the slightest surprise or displeasure. I have seldom heard the Wolf-Man utter a truly resentful criticism, but some of his insinuations, while seeming tolerant and harmless, can actually be rather devastating. Nevertheless when he is talking about persons and problems one feels that he is always trying to understand. He searches for the motives and meaning of behaviour, his own and that of others, in a truly psychoanalytic spirit. This does not mean that he lacks temperament. He has described to me scenes and situations including violent quarrels in some of his relationships with women, which would indicate that his 'completely unbridled instinctual life', as Freud characterized it, can still make its appearance. But however unbridled he may be in scenes of passion, when talking about these situations he often retains an unexpected objectivity. This seems to be related not only to his insight but also to his ambivalence, which almost forces him to see both sides of a question. Even in his most disturbed period of concern about injury to his nose in 1926, he realized, as Ruth Mack Brunswick tells us, 'that his reaction to it was abnormal'. In his more healthy periods his mind is usually open to at least two interpretations of any fact or idea.

This ambivalence may also contribute to another characteristic of the Wolf-Man in all his moods: his constant seeking for advice from others, whenever possible from several others. We have seen how he turned to Dr D. for advice regarding the investment of his money at the end of the First World War, and even followed his advice to gamble, although one might

have thought his own common sense would have rejected such an attempted solution. We know from Freud's and Dr Brunswick's case histories how the Wolf-Man went from one tailor to another and later from one dentist to another and one dermatologist to another and another. It was not difficult to collect a variety of opinions, and the Wolf-Man has a talent for playing off one person against another. Later, in regard to at least one love affair, the Wolf-Man was able to find one advisor who told him: 'If you ever marry that woman you will kill yourself,' and another who said: 'You will certainly commit suicide if you don't marry her.' This makes it easy to find fault with everyone's advice. It has required all my ingenuity not to be drawn into the role of advisor.

Another trait which we see at all periods is the Wolf-Man's attitude to fate. When as a young man he had to give up his early image of himself as a favoured child of fortune, he adopted the opposite view that fate had singled him out for misfortune. Although this theme appears over and over in his letters and talk, he has also occasionally told me and written me: 'I have had great misfortune, but also great happiness in my life.'

As regards the Wolf-Man's personality in his more disturbed periods, the reader probably has, from the case histories, *Memoirs*, and letters, a sufficiently vivid picture. The chief feature is the prominence of his obsessional doubting, brooding, questioning, his being completely engrossed in his own problems and unable to relate to others, unable to read or to paint. On the other hand, he has seldom if ever since his analysis with Freud been completely unable to function. In the two most disturbed periods, his first analysis with Dr Brunswick and the months following his wife's suicide, he still did his work in the insurance office, took active steps to get help for himself, and remained in reasonably good physical health. His depressions did not inactivate him until after his retirement when he sometimes spent most of the day in bed. At earlier times they scarcely even slowed him down, and when it was in his own interest he could even be very active. These depressions do have a certain periodicity. The more severe ones have generally occurred at inter-

vals of about two to four years. But they are usually, possibly always, related to some precipitating event. In some cases, however, the Wolf-Man himself has been instrumental in bringing about this precipitating cause. In my opinion these are not psychotic depressions. What the Wolf-Man experiences as depression is sometimes a reaction to a real loss and sometimes the despair caused by his obsessional doubts, guilt, self-reproaches and feeling of failure. Freud stated: 'I was never able, during an observation which lasted several years, to detect any changes of mood which were disproportionate to the apparent psychological situation either in their intensity or in the circumstances of their appearance.'

It was seven years after the completion of the Wolf-Man's analysis with Freud that the symptoms appeared which caused Ruth Mack Brunswick to consider the Wolf-Man paranoid. When these symptoms disappeared after four months of analysis, the Wolf-Man returned to his 'normal' personality. In the many years I have known him since then, I have never observed any signs or symptoms that I could consider truly paranoid. Some analysts might suggest that he came close to paranoia in 1951 after the episode with the Russians. During the agonizing three weeks of waiting, unable to decide whether or not he should return to the military authorities who had questioned him and told him to come back, the Wolf-Man had, he told me, 'delusions of persecution; I thought people were talking about me or watching me when they certainly were not, though I never actually had the feeling that anyone was following me. It was like that time with my nose when I went to Dr Brunswick, only then I feared a physical deformity [*Entstellung*] and this time a moral deformity.' Nevertheless what the Wolf-Man chiefly talked about at our first subsequent meeting was not so much the fear of what might happen to him (well enough grounded in reality, incidentally), as his self-reproaches for 'this crazy business' of going into the Russian Zone and thereby inviting arrest, his torturing doubts as to why he had done so, and his worries about his own mental condition. He was tormented with self-reproaches 'that I had lost control of myself, that I had lost hold of reality, as Freud would have interpreted

it, and acted as no halfway normal person would have done. I mean, of course, that I - a Russian - went into the Russian Zone to paint.'

It may be objected that four and a half years elapsed between the Russian episode and our meeting at which the Wolf-Man reported it to me. This is true. But in those four and a half years I received many letters from him, none of which gave any indications of psychosis. And during the three years immediately following the episode, our mutual friend Albin was seeing the Wolf-Man at regular intervals and was subjected to all the Wolf-Man's questions and doubts. Albin was not so indiscreet as to write a word about this in his letters, but he gave me a faithful oral report when we met in Switzerland six months after the episode. Albin, although not a psychiatrist, knows human nature well enough to be sensitive to any abnormalities. He had long been aware of the Wolf-Man's obsessional doubting and brooding, and saw this again rather than any new traits in his reaction to the Russian affair. Indeed Albin, himself directly exposed to the conditions of the Russian occupation, felt there was nothing unrealistic in the Wolf-Man's attitude except his vacillation and self-reproaches. I would say that the length of time that the Wolf-Man's uneasiness persisted is the most 'unrealistic' feature of this episode. It was not until 1967 that he expressed his willingness for me to publish what I had written about it, and even then he showed traces of anxiety. This is in keeping with Freud's remarks about the Wolf-Man's 'tenacity of fixation' and his characteristic of 'fending off all novelties'. The Wolf-Man was so fixed in his obsessional questioning and the accompanying anxiety, that even twelve years after the Russian forces had left Austria he could not completely abandon this earlier position.

In August 1955 when the Wolf-Man was on vacation in the Salzkammergut, he was visited by Frederick S. Weil, M.D., psychoanalyst and specialist in Rorschach testing, who wrote a most interesting and illuminating report¹ of their two days together. Besides giving the Wolf-Man a Rorschach test, Dr Weil

1. This report has not been published but was shown to me in manuscript in 1970.

spent the better part of two days simply listening to him. His impressions were very similar to mine when I saw the Wolf-Man in 1949, except that with Dr Weil the Wolf-Man talked only about himself. He did not appear depressed the first day, and only slightly so the following morning, but he complained insistently about his depressions and about the compulsive nature of some of his relationships to women. He repeatedly asked Dr Weil whether nothing could be done to help him.

The Wolf-Man's absorption in himself to the exclusion of all else at this time was undoubtedly a residue of a depression which had lasted from the previous December until one or two months before Dr Weil's visit. During that period of depression I received only two letters from the Wolf-Man, but in July, when he had sufficiently recovered, he wrote me an unusually long letter recounting in detail difficulties in his relationship with a woman, apparently the cause of this disturbance. A month after Dr Weil's visit, the Wolf-Man wrote me about it with evident pleasure and told me about taking the Rorschach. 'Dr Weil told me he would still have to calculate the results of this test. To judge by the first impression, he said, my associations point to an obsessional-compulsive neurosis. I got on very well with Dr Weil, and have the impression that he is a very experienced analyst.'

The analyst whom the Wolf-Man saw once every few months after 1956 and the second analyst whom he has been seeing at more regular intervals in recent years, both diagnosed his disorder as obsessional-compulsive personality.² In the last fifteen or more years the Wolf-Man has been visited by an analyst from abroad who has spent several weeks in Vienna almost every summer in order to see the Wolf-Man daily during these weeks. This brief yearly period of 'analytically directed conversations' is the treatment most comparable to a 'regular' psychoanalysis that the Wolf-Man has had since his analysis with Dr Brunswick. This analyst, too, has told me unequivocally that he considers the Wolf-Man an obsessional-compulsive, and completely excludes schizophrenia, present or past. I myself have seen no

2. The second analyst added that his personality might be 'borderline, with a tendency to acting out'.

evidence of any psychosis during the forty-three years - more than half his lifetime - that I have known the Wolf-Man.

What, then, are we to think about his symptoms and diagnosis in 1926-27 when he first went to Dr Brunswick? The symptoms cannot be doubted, but perhaps in view of the splendid success of this analysis, the rapid reestablishment of the Wolf-Man's former personality, the diagnosis they point to should be scrutinized again. 'The patient himself,' Dr Brunswick tells us, 'while insisting that the injury [to his nose] was all too noticeable, nevertheless realized that his attitude to it was abnormal . . . If nothing could be done for his nose, then something must be done for his state of mind, whether the cause was real or imagined.' This is not the fixed delusion, completely inaccessible to correction, that one thinks of as typical of a paranoid psychosis. Dr Brunswick tells us that the patient's insight was 'responsible for the one atypical characteristic of the case: its ultimate accessibility to analysis, which otherwise would certainly not have been present.' I would say that both the insight and the accessibility to analysis contraindicate psychosis. Nor can I regard as megalomania or delusions of grandeur the patient's feeling of being 'the favourite son' of Freud's. His analysis with Freud, unusually long for that time and including a long period of 'education', then his case history which Freud himself presented to the Wolf-Man, and later Freud's financial assistance when the Wolf-Man was in need, are all logical enough reasons for his feeling of being favoured. The very fact that Freud referred the patient to Dr Brunswick, probably with words of high praise for her ability, is a natural basis for his belief in Freud's continued interest, which one can understand without considering it delusional or a complete 'regression to narcissism'. I believe that Freud himself would have been the last person to deny his interest in his patient's welfare. However, my judgment stems less from the clinical picture at that time, which it is difficult to judge in retrospect, than from the Wolf-Man's earlier personality as we know it through Freud's case history, and his later personality as I and other psychoanalysts have observed it for many years. The earlier and later personality must be taken into account in diagnosing the acute

disorder which brought the Wolf-Man to Dr Brunswick in 1926, and to which, whatever names we give his symptoms and condition, she brought such deep psychoanalytic understanding, and which she so brilliantly treated and cured.

As regards the Wolf-Man's illness as an adult, I believe no better words can be found than Freud's opinion in *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*: 'This case, like many others which clinical psychiatry has labelled with the most multifarious and shifting diagnoses, is to be regarded as a condition following upon an obsessional neurosis which has come to an end spontaneously, but has left a defect behind it after recovery.'

Some manifestations of this defect still remain after the Wolf-Man's analysis: periods of depression, of doubting and vacillation, ambivalence, feelings of guilt, and strong narcissistic needs. These were modified and reduced by analysis, but not destroyed. However, the positive results of the Wolf-Man's analysis are impressive indeed.

The Wolf-Man had come to Freud 'entirely incapacitated and completely dependent upon other people'. He had, we are told, been unable even to dress himself. He could not study and was unprepared for any work whatsoever. He had had no satisfactory relationship with a woman, and no real friendship with either man or woman (unless one can consider his relationship to his sister a friendship). He was severely handicapped in three of life's most important areas: work, love, and taking responsibility.

After his analysis with Freud, the Wolf-Man completed his studies within a short time, got a degree from law school, and a licence to practise law. When he had left Russia and had lost everything he possessed, he obtained work in an insurance company, at first in a subordinate position which must have been particularly hard for this formerly wealthy man who had been waited on all his life. He made steady progress in his work, and, although he never found it interesting, was able to stick to it faithfully for the thirty years until he was pensioned. The Wolf-Man was able to marry, and he supported and cared for his wife during the twenty-three years of their marriage. He also took a true and loving interest in Therese's little daughter,

and grieved over her early death. After his wife's suicide, the Wolf-Man cared tenderly for his mother for fifteen years and, since his mother's death, he has faithfully protected Fräulein Gaby who had done so much for him before she, herself, became sick and dependent. The Wolf-Man, since his analysis, has been able to sustain a number of relationships, and has become altogether less demanding and more considerate of other people. He has gained some mastery over his aggression. Although his analysis did not prevent his depressive reaction to traumata, it strengthened his resistance to stress. And the stresses and real losses in the Wolf-Man's life have been many and great.

There can be no doubt that Freud's analysis saved the Wolf-Man from a crippled existence, and Dr Brunswick's reanalysis overcame a serious acute crisis, both enabling the Wolf-Man to lead a long and tolerably healthy life.

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Muriel Gardiner

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