

The Complete Letters of
SIGMUND FREUD

— to —

WILHELM FLIESS

1887 – 1904

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came today and confessed⁴ that she had thought a lot about the treatment and had discovered an obstacle. "What is that?" — "I can make myself out as bad as I must; but I must spare other people. You must allow me to name no names." — "No doubt names are unimportant. What you mean are your relations to people. Here it surely will not be possible to conceal anything." — "I really mean that earlier I should have been easier to treat than today. Earlier I was unsuspecting; but now the criminal significance of some things has become clear to me and I cannot make up my mind to talk about them." — "On the contrary, I believe a mature woman becomes more tolerant about sexual matters." — "Yes, you are right there. When I say that the people who are guilty of such things are noble and high-minded⁵ I am bound to think that it is a disease, a kind of madness, and I must excuse them." — "Well then, let us speak plainly. In my analyses the guilty people are close relatives, father or brother." — "Nothing has gone on with my brother." — "Your father, then." And it then turned out that her supposedly otherwise noble and respectable father regularly took her to bed when she was from eight to twelve years old and misused her without penetrating ("made her wet," nocturnal visits). She felt anxiety even at the time. A sister, six years her senior, with whom she talked things over many years later, confessed to her that she had had the same experiences with their father. A cousin told her that when she was fifteen she had had to fend off her grandfather's embraces. Of course, when I told her that similar and worse things must have happened in her earliest childhood, she could not find it incredible. In other respects it is a quite ordinary case of hysteria with the usual symptoms.

Q.E.D.

1. See S.E. 4:137.

2. A *pensione* in Venice.

3. Surely a reference to Freud's belief (at this time) that a sexual seduction by the father lies at the heart of neurosis. See letter of December 12, 1897: "Mein Vertrauen in die Vaterätiologie ist sehr gestiegen" (My confidence in paternal etiology has risen greatly).

4. The manuscript reads *beichtet*, not *berichtet* as in *Anfänge*.

5. The manuscript reads *ausgezeichnete, edle Menschen*, not *ausgezeichnet* (as an adverb) *edle Menschen* as in *Anfänge*.

Vienna, May 2, 1897

Dear Wilhelm,

In the interim, received postcard and telegram and regret that the congress did not bring you what it brought me — pleasure and re-

newal. Since then I have been in a continual euphoria and have been working like a young man. As you will gather from the enclosure [Draft L], my acquisitions are becoming consolidated. In the first place, I have gained a sure inkling of the structure of hysteria. Everything goes back to the reproduction of scenes. Some can be obtained directly, others always by way of fantasies set up in front of them. The fantasies stem from things that have been *heard* but understood *subsequently*, and all their material is of course genuine. They are protective structures, sublimations of the facts, embellishments of them, and at the same time serve for self-relief. Their accidental origin is perhaps from masturbation fantasies. A second important piece of insight tells me that the psychic structures which, in hysteria, are affected by repression are not in reality memories — since no one indulges in memory activity without a motive — but *impulses* that derive from primal scenes.¹ I realize now that all three neuroses (hysteria, obsessional neurosis, and paranoia) exhibit the same elements (along with the same etiology) — namely, memory fragments, *impulses* (derived from memories), and *protective fictions*; but the breakthrough into consciousness, the formation of compromises (that is, of symptoms), occurs in them at different points. In hysteria, it is the memories; in obsessional neurosis, the perverse impulses; in paranoia, the protective fictions (fantasies) which penetrate into normal life amid distortions because of compromise.

In this I see a great advance in insight. I hope it strikes you in the same way.

Another confirmation of my protohysteria scenes. In the case of G., I discerned several weeks ago that his mild depression copies a mild depression of his father, which occurred when he himself was not yet quite 2 years old. This could be established in the following way: the father's depression was related to an illness of his which points to an old lues. (The old man actually has bilateral ptosis.) The man underwent a [course of] embrocation treatments that rendered him impotent and disposed him to melancholia. The interruption of marital intercourse was used by another man to force his attentions on the young wife, whereupon the husband, when he learned of his wife's pregnancy, had doubts about the paternity and considered divorce. Now that child is two and a half years younger than my patient; the events related occurred during the first months of the pregnancy, that is, during the period when he was 21 to 24 months old. The following happened: the father, now 62 years old, told his son with whose health he was dissatisfied, "You see, this is what happens when one consults physicians one does not know. In

fact, I too was once depressed, thirty-five years ago *when you were not yet 2 years old*; I went to our family physician; he sent me away for six weeks and I was cured."

In other respects, too, we are very well at present. I still want to ask you whether it seems right to have a scraping of the throat and a tonsillectomy performed on Martin under light anesthesia and whether you do not think *Lauffer* should be contraindicated. Please give me your opinion; I have become noticeably anxious this year.

On the 15th of May we go to Aussee, where, as you remember, a little guesthouse is waiting for you all. I cannot send you a model made of bread yet. My recovery so far extends only to unconscious work; I cannot yet do it consciously.

I hope that you have finally found the lakes enjoyable. Nor do I easily forgive you the criticism of Venice, but I understand a little of the harmony and the austere structure, built according to the most beautiful proportions, of your psychic processes.

Best wishes to you both for enjoyable days.

Your
Sigm.

1. A reference to Freud's belief that a sexual seduction by the father is the source of neurosis. See his letter of December 12, 1897.

Draft L

[enclosed with letter]

The Architecture of Hysteria

The aim seems to be to reach the earliest [sexual] scenes.¹ In a few cases this is achieved directly, but in others only by a detour via fantasies. For fantasies are psychic facades produced in order to bar access to these memories. Fantasies simultaneously serve the tendency toward refining the memories, toward sublimating them. They are manufactured by means of things that are *heard*, and utilized *subsequently*, and thus combine things experienced and heard, past events (from the history of parents and ancestors), and things that have been seen by oneself. They are related to things heard, as dreams are related to things seen. In dreams, to be sure, we hear nothing; but we see.

The Part Played by Servant Girls

An immense load of guilt, with self-reproaches (for theft, abortion), is made possible by identification with these people of low morals who are so often remembered, in a sexual connection with father or brother, as worthless female material. And, as a result of the sublimation of these girls in fantasies, most improbable charges against other people are contained in the fantasies. Fear of prostitution (fear of being in the street alone), fear of a man hidden under the bed, and so on, also point in the direction of the servant girl. There is tragic justice in the circumstance that the family head's stooping to a maidservant is atoned for by his daughter's self-abasement.

Mushrooms

Last summer a girl was afraid to pick a flower or *even* to pull up a mushroom, because it was against the command of God, who did not wish living seeds to be destroyed. — This arose from a memory of religious scruples² of her mother's about precautions during coitus, because thereby living seeds would be destroyed. "Sponges" (Paris sponges)³ were explicitly mentioned among these precautions. The main content of her neurosis was identification with her mother.

Pains

Not an actual sensation of a fixation, but an intentional repetition of it. The child knocks up against a corner, a piece of furniture, or something similar, and so makes contact *ad genitalia*, in order to repeat a scene in which what is now the painful spot, and was then pressed against the corner, led to fixation.

Multiplicity of Psychic Personalities

The fact of identification perhaps allows us to take the phrase *literally*.

Wrapping Up

A supplement to the mushroom story. The girl demanded that all objects handed to her be wrapped up. (Condom.)

Multiple Editions of Fantasies — Do they also connect back again [to the original experience]?

In cases in which patients wish to be ill and cling to their suffering, this regularly happens because the suffering is regarded as a protective weapon against their own libido — that is, because of mistrust in themselves. In this phase the mnemonic symptom becomes a defensive symptom: the two active currents combine. At earlier stages the symptom was a consequence of the libido, a provocative symptom: it may be that between the stages fantasies serve for defense.

It is possible to follow the path, the time, and the material of the formation of fantasies, which then closely resembles the formation of dreams. But there is no regression in the form [of representation the fantasies are given], only progression. A relationship among dreams, fantasies, and reproduction.

Another Wish-Dream

"I suppose that this is a wishful dream," said E. "I dreamed that, just as I arrived at my house with a lady, I was arrested by a policeman, who requested me to get into a carriage. I demanded more time to put my affairs in order, and so on. It was in the morning, after I had spent the night with this lady." — "Were you horrified?" — "No." — "Do you know what you were charged with?" — "Yes. With having killed a child." — "Has that any connection with reality?" — "I was once responsible for the abortion of a child resulting from an affair. I dislike thinking about it." — "Well, had nothing happened on the morning before the dream?" — "Yes, I woke up and had intercourse." — "But you took precautions?" — "Yes. By withdrawing." — "Then you were afraid you might have made a child, and the dream shows you the fulfillment of your wish that nothing should happen, that you nipped the child in the bud. You made use of the feeling of anxiety that arises after a coitus of that kind as material for your dream."

1. *Urszenen*. Freud means, I believe, the scenes of real seduction — the earliest scenes. "Primal scene," in the later sense of intercourse between parents, is first used in the wolf-man discussion (S.E. 18:391).

2. The manuscript reads *Skrupel*, rather than *Sprüche* as in *Anfänge*.

3. A form of contraceptive. The German *Schwämme* means both "mushrooms" and "sponges."

May 16, 1897

Dear Wilhelm,

I am now ready to enjoy a nice Sunday evening and thank you for your last letter, which was so very edifying. Bunge¹ was extremely good for me. After all, we do not want to be the only intelligent people in the world; what makes sense to us must also be to the liking of a few capable fellows. Bunge surely makes up for a whole flock of university professors. I spared myself informing you of two miserable critiques that have come to my knowledge since Nuremberg — one of them by an assistant of Chrobak. You can calmly put up with it.

I could tell from your letter that you are mentally refreshed. I hope that now you will remain your old self again for a long time and will let me go on taking advantage of you as a kindly disposed audience. Without such an audience I really cannot work. If you agree, I shall proceed as I did last time and send you whatever notes I have ready, with the request that you return them when I ask. No matter where I start, I always am right back with the neuroses and with the ψ [psychic] apparatus. It certainly is neither personal nor objective indifference if I cannot get my pen to write anything else. Things are fermenting and bubbling in me; I am only waiting for a new thrust. I cannot make up my mind about writing the preliminary outline of the total work you desire; I believe what prevents me is an obscure expectation that shortly something essential will turn up. On the other hand, I have felt impelled to start working on the dream, where I feel so very certain — and in your judgment am entitled to. For the time being I had to interrupt; hurriedly had to prepare an abstract of all my publications² for the printer; the vote [on the professorship] is going to take place any day. Now I have finished and am thinking about the dream [book] again. I have been looking into the literature and feel like the Celtic imp: "Oh, how glad I am that no one, no one knows . . ." ³ No one even suspects that the dream is not nonsense but wish fulfillment.

I do not know whether I have already written to you about it; surely yes, and only as a precaution I repeat that now the source of auditory hallucinations in paranoia has been uncovered. The fantasies derive, as in hysteria, from what has been heard and understood subsequently.

A proud ship was wrecked for me a few days after my return. My banker, who was furthest along in his analysis, took off at a critical point, just before he was to bring me the last scenes. This certainly also damaged me materially, and convinced me that I do not yet know everything after all about the mainspring of the matter. But