

The Complete Letters of
SIGMUND FREUD

— to —

WILHELM FLIESS

1887 – 1904

Translated and Edited by
Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson



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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."

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

refreshed as I was, I easily took it in stride and told myself, so I shall wait still longer for a treatment to be completed. It must be possible and must be done.

Cousin Elise v. G. probably will leave shortly, or at least stop. Her behavior was very odd; it remains to be seen whether it [treatment] was of some use to her and whether she will want to continue. There is no question that the matter has not been finished.

I wanted to send the children to Aussee on the 18th; Martha wanted to stay here until Whitsun. The miserable weather made us postpone it indefinitely. Martin has had another attack of mild *poetitis*, this time somewhat prematurely, thirty-five days after the last poem, but $35 + 56 = 91$ since the last throat infection. By the way, this time the inspiration lasted more than two days; at the same time he lost two teeth, with two days in between. He wrote a poem, "Holidays in the Woods," and then a second, still incomplete one, "The Hunt." That his operation has been done, you can infer from the following verse from his "Conversations of Wise Animals":

"Hare," said the roe.

"Does your throat still hurt when you swallow?"

It was too funny for words when Oli, looking at this production, was indignant about the inevitable spelling mistakes. Really the Xenophon of the *Fliegende Blätter*, when the Greeks again saw the sea and exclaimed in delight, "thalassa" ("one can also saythalata"). Mathilde is now enraptured by mythology and recently wept bitter tears because the Greeks, who used to be such great heroes, suffered such heavy blows at the hand of the Turks. Quite an amusing bunch.

By the way, didn't you meet the Breuers in Bolzano? They left for Bolzano the day I arrived. Four weeks have already gone by since that beautiful first day of Easter.

I now have several new students and a real pupil — from Berlin, a Dr. Gattel,⁴ who was an assistant at Levinstein's Maison de Santé and who came here to learn something from me. I promised to instruct him, in the old classical fashion (peripatetically) rather than in the laboratory and on the medical ward, and am curious to see how he will get on. Incidentally, he is half-American and a nephew of Professor Dresenfeld in Manchester.

During the past few days I had all sorts of fine ideas for you, but they have disappeared again. I must wait for the next thrust which will bring them back. Until then I would like to have good and detailed news of you, Ida, and Robert, as well as of how Siebert and your mother are.

Most cordial greetings and good luck in your work.

Your
Sigm.

1. Gustav Bunge (1844–1920), physiologist in Basel.

2. The abstract was published in *S.E.* 3:225–256.

3. The German text reads, "Ach wie bin ich froh, dass es niemand, niemand weiss." This was translated in *Origins* as, "How glad I am that no man's eyes have pierced the veil of Puck's [?] disguise" (p. 201). Freud is quoting from the brothers Grimm — Rumpelstilzchen, whose name nobody knows. Why Freud would call him a Celtic imp is not clear.

4. Felix Gattel, a Berlin physician, may actually have been sent to Freud by Fliess (see Decker, 1977; Sulloway, 1979, p. 513; and Jones, *Life* 1:334). In 1898 Gattel published a sixty-eight-page book, *Über die sexuellen Ursachen der Neurasthenie und Angstneurose* (Berlin: Hirschwald). Möbius gave it a negative review in *Schmidt's Jahrbücher der in- und ausländischen gesamten Medizin*, 259 (1898):214. More damaging was the review by Krafft-Ebing's assistant, P. Karplus (whom Gattel thanks in his preface), in *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift*, 2(1898):689–690, which includes a severe criticism of Freud. (Freud had evidently explained to Gattel that a "seductive" four-year-old girl is only "repeating an act that had previously been perpetrated on her," an idea that Karplus considers outrageous.)

May 25, 1897

Dear Wilhelm,

I am sending you herewith the "List of All the Beauties . . ." ¹¹ The decision of the board has been delayed; there was new opposition and consequent postponement at the last meeting. Fortunately my interests lie elsewhere.

The enclosed contains a thrust of ideas which arouse great hope in me. If I manage to get through it, I shall make the familiar visit to Berlin. I estimate that this will not happen until next year.

I was very amused by your analyses of the gestation periods. If only I had the geometry for this algebra! In assuming these differences, you are obviously allowing for the position that it is not the day but the phase from ——— to ——— that determines the event. But then, what does N. [?] 23–28 mean, where 28 is larger than 23? The obscurity arouses the most interesting expectations.

My gang left for Aussee yesterday evening with Minna and arrived, according to reports, in beautiful weather. Martha will stay here until Whitsun.

Martin's first throat infection

Martin's second throat infection

Sunday February 14

Saturday April 10