

PREFACE [TO THE FIRST EDITION]

I HAVE attempted in this volume to give an account of the interpretation of dreams; and in doing so I have not, I believe, trespassed beyond the sphere of interest covered by neuropathology. For psychological investigation shows that the dream is the first member of a class of abnormal psychical phenomena of which further members, such as hysterical phobias, obsessions and delusions, are bound for practical reasons to be a matter of concern to physicians. As will be seen in the sequel, dreams can make no such claim to practical importance; but their theoretical value as a paradigm is on the other hand proportionately greater. Anyone who has failed to explain the origin of dream-images can scarcely hope to understand phobias, obsessions or delusions or to bring a therapeutic influence to bear on them.

But the same correlation that is responsible for the importance of the subject must also bear the blame for the deficiencies of the present work. The broken threads which so frequently interrupt my presentation are nothing less than the many points of contact between the problem of the formation of dreams and the more comprehensive problems of psychopathology. These cannot be treated here, but, if time and strength allow and further material comes to hand, will form the subject of later communications.

The difficulties of presentation have been further increased by the peculiarities of the material which I have had to use to illustrate the interpreting of dreams. It will become plain in the course of the work itself why it is that none of the dreams already reported in the literature of the subject or collected from unknown sources could be of any use for my purposes. The only dreams open to my choice were my own and those of my

patients undergoing psychoanalytic treatment. But I was precluded from using the latter material by the fact that in its case the dream-processes were subject to an undesirable complication owing to the added presence of neurotic features. But if I was to report my own dreams, it inevitably followed that I should have to reveal to the public gaze more of the intimacies of my mental life than I liked, or than is normally necessary for any writer who is a man of science and not a poet. Such was the painful but unavoidable necessity; and I have submitted to it rather than totally abandon the possibility of giving the evidence for my psychological findings. Naturally, however, I have been unable to resist the temptation of taking the edge off some of my indiscretions by omissions and substitutions. But whenever this has happened, the value of my instances has been very definitely diminished. I can only express a hope that readers of this book will put themselves in my difficult situation and treat me with indulgence, and further, that anyone who finds any sort of reference to himself in my dreams may be willing to grant me the right of freedom of thought – in my dream-life, if nowhere else.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IF within ten years of the publication of this book (which is very far from being an easy one to read) a second edition is called for, this is not due to the interest taken in it by the professional circles to whom my original preface was addressed. My psychiatric colleagues seem to have taken no trouble to overcome the initial bewilderment created by my new approach to dreams. The professional philosophers have become accustomed to polishing off the problems of dream-life (which they treat as a mere appendix to conscious states) in a few sentences – and usually in the same ones; and they have evidently failed to notice that we have something here from which a number of inferences can be drawn that are bound to transform our psychological theories. The attitude adopted by reviewers in the scientific periodicals could only lead one to suppose that my work was doomed to be sunk into complete silence; while the small group of gallant supporters, who practise medical psycho-analysis under my guidance and who follow my example in interpreting dreams and make use of their interpretations in treating neurotics, would never have exhausted the first edition of the book. Thus it is that I feel indebted to a wider circle of educated and curious-minded readers, whose interest has led me to take up once more after nine years this difficult, but in many respects fundamental, work.

I am glad to say that I have found little to change in it. Here and there I have inserted some new material, added some fresh points of detail derived from my increased experience, and at some few points recast my statements. But the essence of what I have written about dreams and their interpretation, as well

as about the psychological theorems to be deduced from them – all this remains unaltered; subjectively at all events, it has stood the test of time. Anyone who is acquainted with my other writings (on the aetiology and mechanism of the psychoneuroses) will know that I have never put forward inconclusive opinions as though they were established facts, and that I have always sought to modify my statements so that they may keep in step with my advancing knowledge. In the sphere of dream-life I have been able to leave my original assertions unchanged. During the long years in which I have been working at the problems of the neuroses I have often been in doubt and sometimes been shaken in my convictions. At such times it has always been the *Interpretation of Dreams* that has given me back my certainty. It is thus a sure instinct which has led my many scientific opponents to refuse to follow me more especially in my researches upon dreams.

An equal durability and power to withstand any far-reaching alterations during the process of revision has been shown by the *material* of the book, consisting as it does of dreams of my own which have for the most part been overtaken or made valueless by the march of events and by which I illustrated the rules of dream-interpretation. For this book has a further subjective significance for me personally – a significance which I only grasped after I had completed it. It was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death – that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life. Having discovered that this was so, I felt unable to obliterate the traces of the experience.¹ To my readers, however, it will be a matter of indifference upon what particular material they learn to appreciate the importance of dreams and how to interpret them.

Wherever I have found it impossible to incorporate some

1. [Freud's father had died in 1896. Some account of his feelings at the time will be found in his letter to Fliess of November 2, 1896. (Freud 1950a, Letter 50.)]

essential addition into the original context, I have indicated its more recent date by enclosing it in square brackets.¹

BERCHTESGADEN, *Summer* 1908

1. [*Footnote added 1914:*] In later editions [from the fourth onwards] these were omitted.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

NINE years elapsed between the first and second editions of this book, but after scarcely more than a single year a third edition has become necessary. This new turn of events may please me; but just as formerly I was unwilling to regard the neglect of my book by readers as evidence of its worthlessness, so I cannot claim that the interest which is now being taken in it is a proof of its excellence.

Even the *Interpretation of Dreams* has not been left untouched by the advance of scientific knowledge. When I wrote it in 1899, my *Theory of Sexuality* [*Three Essays* (1905*d*)] was not yet in existence and the analysis of the more complicated forms of psycho-neurosis was only just beginning. It was my hope that dream-interpretation would help to make possible the psychological analysis of neuroses; since then a deeper understanding of neuroses has reacted in turn upon our view of dreams. The theory of dream-interpretation has itself developed further in a direction on which insufficient stress had been laid in the first edition of this book. My own experience, as well as the works of Wilhelm Stekel and others, have since taught me to form a truer estimate of the extent and importance of symbolism in dreams (or rather in unconscious thinking). Thus in the course of these years much has accumulated which demands attention. I have endeavoured to take these innovations into account by making numerous interpolations in the text and by additional footnotes. If these additions threaten at times to burst the whole framework of the book or if I have not everywhere succeeded in bringing the original text up to the level of our present knowledge, I must ask the reader's indulgence for these deficiencies: they are the results and signs of the present increasingly rapid development

of our science. I may even venture to prophesy in what other directions later editions of this book – if any should be needed – will differ from the present one. They will have on the one hand to afford a closer contact with the copious material presented in imaginative writing, in myths, in linguistic usage and in folklore; while on the other hand they will have to deal in greater detail than has here been possible with the relations of dreams to neuroses and mental diseases.

Herr Otto Rank has given me valuable assistance in selecting the additional matter and has been entirely responsible for correcting the proofs. I owe my thanks to him and to many others for their contributions and corrections.

VIENNA, *Spring* 1911

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

LAST year (1913) Dr A. A. Brill of New York produced an English translation of this book (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, G. Allen & Co., London).

On this occasion Dr Otto Rank has not only corrected the proofs but has also contributed two self-contained chapters to the text – the appendices to Chapter VI.

VIENNA, *June* 1914

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

INTEREST in the *Interpretation of Dreams* has not flagged even during the World War, and while it is still in progress a new edition has become necessary. It has not been possible, however, to notice fully publications since 1914; neither Dr Rank nor I have any knowledge of foreign works since that date.

A Hungarian translation, prepared by Dr Hollós and Dr Ferenczi, is on the point of appearing. In 1916-17 my *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* were published in Vienna by Hugo Heller. The central section of these, comprising eleven lectures, is devoted to an account of dreams which aims at being more elementary and at being in closer contact with the theory of the neuroses than the present work. On the whole it is in the nature of an epitome of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, though at certain points it enters into greater detail.

I have not been able to bring myself to embark upon any fundamental revision of this book, which might bring it up to the level of our present psycho-analytic views but would on the other hand destroy its historic character. I think, however, that after an existence of nearly twenty years it has accomplished its task.

BUDAPEST-STEINBRUCH, July 1918

PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

OWING to the difficulties in which the book trade is placed at present, this new edition has long been in demand, and the preceding edition has, for the first time, been reprinted without any alterations. Only the bibliography at the end of the volume has been completed and brought up to date by Dr Otto Rank.

Thus my assumption that after an existence of nearly twenty years this book had accomplished its task has not been confirmed. On the contrary, I might say that it has a new task to perform. If its earlier function was to offer some information on the nature of dreams, now it has the no less important duty of dealing with the obstinate misunderstanding to which that information is subject.

VIENNA, April 1921

essays which Otto Rank contributed to earlier editions, on 'Dreams and Creative Writing' and 'Dreams and Myths', have also been omitted. [See p. 35.]

VIENNA, December 1929

PREFACE TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

DURING the interval between the publication of the last (seventh) edition of this book in 1922 and the present one, my *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Writings] have been issued in Vienna by the Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag. The second volume of that collection consists of an exact reprint of the first edition of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, while the third volume contains all the additions that have since been made to it. The translations of the book which have appeared during the same interval are based upon the usual, single-volume, form of the work: a French one by I. Meyerson published under the title of *La Science des rêves* in the 'Bibliothèque de Philosophie Contemporaine' in 1926; a Swedish one by John Landquist, *Drömtydning* (1927); and a Spanish one by Luis López-Ballesteros y de Torres [1922], which occupies Volumes VI and VII of the *Obras Completas*. The Hungarian translation, which I thought was on the point of completion as long ago as in 1918, has even now not appeared.¹

In the present revised edition of the work I have again treated it essentially as an historic document and I have only made such alterations in it as were suggested by the clarification and deepening of my own opinions. In accordance with this, I have finally given up the idea of including a list of works on the problems of dreams published since the book's first appearance, and that section has now been dropped. The two

1. [It was published in 1934.— During Freud's lifetime, in addition to the translations mentioned in these prefaces, a Russian version appeared in 1913, a Japanese one in 1930 and a Czech one in 1938.]

PREFACE TO THE THIRD (REVISED)
ENGLISH EDITION¹

IN 1909 G. Stanley Hall invited me to Clark University, in Worcester, to give the first lectures on psycho-analysis². In the same year Dr Brill published the first of his translations of my writings, which were soon followed by further ones. If psycho-analysis now plays a role in American intellectual life, or if it does so in the future, a large part of this result will have to be attributed to this and other activities of Dr Brill's.

His first translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared in 1913. Since then much has taken place in the world, and much has been changed in our views about the neuroses. This book, with the new contribution to psychology which surprised the world when it was published (1900), remains essentially unaltered. It contains, even according to my present-day judgement, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime.

VIENNA, March 15, 1931

1. [This is not included in the German editions and no German text is extant. It is here reprinted exactly from the 1932 English edition.]

2. [*Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910a).]

CHAPTER I
THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE
DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS
OF DREAMS

IN the pages that follow I shall bring forward proof that there is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and that, if that procedure is employed, every dream reveals itself as a psychical structure which has a meaning and which can be inserted at an assignable point in the mental activities of waking life. I shall further endeavour to elucidate the processes to which the strangeness and obscurity of dreams are due and to deduce from those processes the nature of the psychical forces by whose concurrent or mutually opposing action dreams are generated. Having gone thus far, my description will break off, for it will have reached a point at which the problem of dreams merges into more comprehensive problems, the solution of which must be approached upon the basis of material of another kind.

I shall give by way of preface a review of the work done by earlier writers on the subject as well as of the present position of the problems of dreams in the world of science, since in the course of my discussion I shall not often have occasion to revert to those topics. For, in spite of many thousands of years of effort, the scientific understanding of dreams has made very little advance – a fact so generally admitted in the literature that it seems unnecessary to quote instances in support of it. In these writings, of which a list appears at the end of my work, many stimulating observations are to be found and a quantity of interesting material bearing upon our theme, but little or nothing that touches upon the essential nature of dreams or that offers a final solution of any of their enigmas.