

The Complete Letters of  
**SIGMUND FREUD**  
— to —  
**WILHELM FLIESS**  
1887 – 1904

Translated and Edited by  
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The Belknap Press of  
Harvard University Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, and  
London, England  
1985

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## Preface



THE PUBLICATION in German in 1950, then in English in 1954, of *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis*, a selective edition of Sigmund Freud's letters to Wilhelm Fliess, stimulated every reader's desire including my own — for a full and unabridged edition of these extraordinary documents. I approached Freud's daughter Anna in 1978 and told her of my interest and my certainty that the unpublished letters contained valuable information. She allowed me access to the documents from 1897, and when I was able to show her that they did indeed contain significant material for historians of psychoanalysis, she was willing to consider permitting a complete version of the letters to be published. But it was only when K. R. Fessler, Miss Freud's close friend and trusted adviser, added his voice to mine that she relented fully and agreed to let me prepare a new edition. I did not realize at the time how complicated this task would become, how much effort it would involve, how many counties would have to be visited, how many libraries searched, how many documents tracked down. When I had finished, 133 previously unpublished items in the correspondence had been added to the 168 documents presented, in full or in part, in *Origins*.

It is a hazardous undertaking to edit a work of this magnitude, which is likely to change the image of a great man. Still, I think most readers will agree that a more human, more likable Sigmund Freud emerges from this complete version of his letters to Fliess. It is also true that the fuller rendition of his thinking about some of his key theories contrasts rather starkly with the version that Freud presented to posterity many years later in his published works. This is perhaps inevitable. It is also inevitable that access to works that were never meant to be printed forces the impartial historian to difficult, sometimes unpopular conclusions. In this new edition I have attempted to present the letters as objectively as possible and

have refrained from making any interpretations or evaluations of my own.

Anna Freud, once she had made her decision to permit publication of the letters, gave of her time and her knowledge with unflinching generosity. I spent a great deal of time in her house in Maresfield Gardens, London (which had also been her father's home during the last year of his life), reading in Freud's personal library and rummaging through drawers and cupboards for documents that would clarify some of the allusions in his letters to Fliess. I had many conversations with Anna Freud about the letters and their content. Both of us rapidly became caught up in the excitement of meticulously searching Freud's desk and there finding documents long thought lost. I believe that Miss Freud came to realize how much material remained to be discovered and what joy there was in finding some of it. Certainly she shared with me the considerable pleasure to be experienced in the kind of detective work that compiling these letters involved.

My primary gratitude, then, is reserved for the late Anna Freud and her many acts of kindness toward me. Moreover, without the assistance of K. R. Eissler, this project could never have begun. He gave generously of his time and energy and facilitated my access, in the Library of Congress and elsewhere, to a vast storehouse of original documents, many of which have enriched the annotation of this volume.

All those interested in these letters owe a special debt of gratitude to Marie Bonaparte for having rescued the original documents, and to Ernst Kris along with Anna Freud for the first edition of the letters.

Lottie Newman, selected by Anna Freud as the translator, prepared the first draft of the entire translation and compared it against every existing translation. She also made many worthwhile suggestions and excellent criticisms of later drafts. Gerhard Fichtner is responsible for the German text upon which the new translation is based. Needless to say, without his help this volume would not have been possible. He took time from a busy schedule at the University of Tübingen to come to Berkeley, California, where I was working, and offer his scholarly support. Marianne Loring, my research assistant, deserves a large portion of the credit for the final version. Many of the notes too owe a great deal to her research abilities. She has been my intellectual companion over the six years of compiling this work, and it is no exaggeration to say that I could not have managed without her cheerful, unstinting, and skillful help. The book, then, owes its present form to the help of these three people:

Lottie Newman, Gerhard Fichtner, and Marianne Loring. I am more grateful than I can say to all three of them.

I have been supported throughout this work by Mark Paterson, executive director of Sigmund Freud Copyrights. Ilse Grubrich-Smitis has always been ready with valuable advice. Muriel Gardiner has been enthusiastic about the project from the beginning. And the late Elenore Fliess, widow of Wilhelm Fliess's son Robert, became a personal friend during the writing of this book. I regret that she did not live to see the work in print; I know it would have given her much pleasure.

Arthur Rosenthal, director of Harvard University Press, has given strong and consistent support throughout the compilation of this new edition. Vivian Wheeler has been the ideal editor—tactful, helpful, and wise—and it has been a privilege to work with her.

Some of the letters contained in this volume come from the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, where they had been deposited by Fliess's daughter, Pauline Fliess Jacobsohn. Peter Fawcetts called them to my attention, and I am indebted to Mrs. Jacobsohn for permission to use them. Princess Eugenie of Greece kindly allowed use of excerpts from Marie Bonaparte's notebook. John Broderick, Paul Hefron, and especially Ronald Wilkinson and the staff at the Library of Congress Manuscript Division were ever willing to help me find material difficult of access, and to provide me with copies of whatever I needed.

Albert Dickson, Allan Keiler, and Michael Schröter have made a number of useful corrections in the final translation.

I should like also to thank the following individuals, who have assisted in various ways: Angela Harris, Susan Mango, Annie Urbach, Robert Wallerstein, and Trude Weisskopf.

A work of this magnitude could not have been accomplished without financial aid. For their generous assistance I am grateful to the New Land Foundation, the Fund for Psychoanalytic Research of the American Psychoanalytic Association, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

J. M. M.

## Note on Method



THIS TRANSLATION of Freud's letters to Fliess is based on a completely new German text, and it is important to understand the derivation of both the German and the English versions.

Anna Freud made available to me the original transcript of the German holograph of all the letters, as corrected by her and Ernst Fliess, and published, with omissions, in *Sigmund Freud, Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*. I obtained photocopies of all the original letters that are housed in the Library of Congress, and of several that are among the papers of the late James Strachey. My colleague Marianne Loring then compared these 284 original letters with the transcript. She and I made many corrections in the transcript, a number of which I discussed with Anna Freud. Later Gerhard Fichtner, director of the Institute for the History of Medicine at the University of Tübingen and a noted authority on Freud, went through the entire set of letters once again and uncovered further errors, both in *Anfänge* and in the improved transcript. Fichtner prepared a new transcript, which Loring and I again reviewed and corrected. Fichtner compared this with the original letters a third time and prepared a final transcript. It is that document from which the present translation derives.

Lottie Newman prepared the first draft of this translation, which Marianne Loring and I revised several times before reaching the present version. Except for occasional amendments, I have followed Strachey's excellent revisions for the first volume of his *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

A comparison of this translation with those previously published in *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis* and in the *Standard Edition* will show that mine often varies in ways that suggest more than a different understanding of the German (although this too is sometimes the case). Frequently the German text Fichtner has established

differs from the text printed in *Anfänge*. When the discrepancy seems particularly important, I have noted it; but often I have simply used the correct version. The reader will be able to see the changes by consulting the new German text, for an improved German edition of the letters is being published simultaneously with this volume by S. Fischer Verlag in Frankfurt, under the title *Sigmund Freud, Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904. Vollständige Ausgabe. Herausgegeben von Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson; Bearbeitung der deutschen Fassung von Michael Schröter; Transkription von Gerhard Fichtner*.

In my annotation I have attempted not to elaborate on the obvious, or to cite information that the reader can easily obtain (for example, by consulting Ernest Jones's three-volume biography of Freud). For this reason I have frequently not reproduced material that is available in Ernst Kris's notes to the earlier edition of the letters, but have simply referred the reader to that edition. Nor have I duplicated Strachey's labors; Strachey's first volume of the *Standard Edition* is particularly helpful in pointing the reader to later works by Freud that expand the ideas first mentioned in these letters.

Freud's own footnotes are signaled by asterisks and other symbols; numbers indicate my own annotation. I have tried to keep the notes to a strict minimum, avoiding the temptation to speculate or to interpret. The reader will find primarily identifications of persons, places, and family events, where these are known; explanations of obscure allusions, political happenings, or literary events; and brief comments on contemporary reviews of works by both Freud and Fliess. Michael Schröter has written a number of additional notes for the German edition of these letters, which he has kindly placed at my disposal. Where I have used them in this edition, I have so indicated.

An occasional Editor's Note explains uncertainties of dating or describes unusual materials. Freud's name and office hours on his letterhead stationery have been dropped as repetitious; the return address and date have been retained. Names of patients are masked, unless they have previously been made public. Bracketed insertions of information in the letters may involve explanations of foreign phrases, additions necessitated by the conversion of German into English, or alternatives to uncertain readings.

I have made a few silent corrections: if Freud made a mistake in grammar or punctuation, for instance, I have not flagged it. Moreover, it seemed pedantic to use brackets to indicate that the translated English required more words than the German. Thus pro-

nouns, often omitted in German, have been included in the English without comment. Gaps and illegible words in the original holograph have been noted, but no liberties have been taken with the tone of Freud's own writing. Any minor changes have been in the interest of clarity.

The section at the back of the book entitled *Principal Works Cited* contains all publications of Freud and Fliess mentioned in the letters, and any reviews thereof that are cited. The listing of works by other authors is selective and includes, for the most part, present-day authors whose views are mentioned or discussed herein. Writers contemporary with Freud and Fliess, usually only mentioned in passing, are cited in full in the notes.

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# Introduction



SIGMUND FREUD'S LETTERS to his closest friend, Wilhelm Fliess, are probably the single most important group of documents in the history of psychoanalysis. At no time intended for publication, the letters date from 1887 to 1904, a period that spans the birth and development of psychoanalysis. During the seventeen years of the correspondence Freud wrote some of his most revolutionary works: *Studies on Hysteria*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," and the famous case study of Dora. Never has the creator of a totally new field of human knowledge so overtly and in such detail revealed the thought processes leading to his discoveries. None of the later writings have the immediacy and the impact of these early letters, nor do any reveal so dramatically Freud's innermost thoughts as he was in the very act of creation. The result is an extraordinarily compelling set of writings. They are presented here, for the first time, without any excisions.

At the time the correspondence began, Freud was a thirty-one-year-old lecturer in neuropathology at the University of Vienna. Newly married to Martha Bernays, he had just established his own neurological practice after having studied in Paris for six months with the noted neurologist Jean Martin Charcot. Fliess, twenty-nine, was already a successful ear, nose, and throat doctor in Berlin. In the fall of 1887 he went to Vienna to study with specialists there, and apparently the eminent physician Josef Breuer (1842–1925), then Freud's mentor, colleague, and friend, suggested that Fliess attend Freud's lectures at the university. A few months later, after Fliess had returned to Berlin, Freud wrote the first of a long series of letters that was to chart the origins and evolution of psychoanalysis.

Within five years Freud and Fliess were regular correspondents. In 1890 they began meeting in Berlin, in Vienna (where Fliess's

## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS CITED

- Anfänge* Sigmund Freud, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse. Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, Abhandlungen und Notizen aus den Jahren 1887–1902*. Edited by Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris; introduction by Ernst Kris. London: Imago Publishing Company, 1950.
- G.W. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*. 18 vols. Edited by Anna Freud, with the collaboration of Marie Bonaparte; E. Bibring, W. Hoffer, E. Kris, and O. Isakower. London: Imago Publishing Company, 1940–1952.
- Jones, *Life* Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*. 3 vols. New York: Basic Books, 1954–1957.
- Letters* *Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873–1939*. Edited by Ernst L. Freud; translated by Tania Stern and James Stern. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.
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