

The Complete Letters of  
**SIGMUND FREUD**

— to —

**WILHELM FLIESS**

1887 – 1904

Translated and Edited by  
**Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson**



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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 I approached Freud's daughter Anna in 1978 and told her of my interest and my certainty that the unpublished letters contained valuable information.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 countries 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 When I had finished, 133 previously unpublished items in the correspondence had been added to the 168 documents presented, in full or in part, in *Origins*.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 unfailing 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 Gardner 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 Swales 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 Kris 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.

The Complete Letters of  
Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess  
1887 - 1904

## Introduction



### 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.
- Origins* *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes, 1887–1902, by Sigmund Freud*. Edited by Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris; translated by Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey; introduction by Ernst Kris. New York: Basic Books, and London: Imago Publishing Company, 1954.
- S.E.* *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 vols. Edited by James Strachey; translated in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–1974.

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

fiancée, Ida Bondy, lived until she and Fliess were married in 1892), and in various Austrian and German towns for what the two men came to call their private "congresses." The relationship grew and deepened: Fliess became Freud's closest friend, and Freud was more open with Fliess than with anyone else in expressing his feelings and thoughts about professional and personal matters.

It is not possible to know for certain what drew the men together. There are obvious similarities: both were Jewish, both were physicians, and both were involved in medical research. More important probably, they found early on that both were interested in aspects of medical science that lay outside the customary channels of research. Both, for instance, visited Paris to work with Charcot. A love of scientific adventure and inquiry seemed to unite them professionally. Moreover, their meetings revealed an uncommon willingness to talk at a personal level and to reveal details of family life. Freud's relentless probing into the psychological consequences of his patients' early sexual experiences was not welcomed by his more conservative medical colleagues, and the ensuing isolation undoubtedly explains the increasing frequency of the letters. For many years Fliess was Freud's only audience.

In an unpublished letter of April 7, 1893, to his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays, Freud described his admiration and affection for Fliess: "He is a most unusual person, good nature personified: and I believe, if it came to it, he would for all his genius, be goodness itself. Therefore his sunlike clarity, his pluck."<sup>1</sup>

Freud was almost reverential toward Fliess. On January 1, 1896, he wrote: "Your kind should not die out, my dear friend; the rest of us need people like you too much. How much I owe you: solace, understanding, stimulation in my loneliness, meaning to my life that I gained through you, and finally even health that no one else could have given back to me."

It is not illuminating to claim, as some have done, that this intense relationship was one of transference — that it was a necessary forerunner of Freud's own self-analysis. Every love relation, which this one certainly was, contains an essential mystery that defies comprehension. Freud himself would later speak of the homosexual component of this friendship,<sup>2</sup> and in fact both men believed that elements of bisexuality are inherent in all individuals.

1. This letter, given me by Freud's daughter Anna, was found at Maresfield Gardens in London, Freud's last home. Translations of all unpublished letters throughout this Introduction are mine.

2. Ernest Jones (*Life* 2:92) quotes a letter of October 6, 1910, from Freud to his friend and colleague Sándor Ferenczi: "You not only noticed, but also understood, that I *no*

The commentary of Robert Fliess, Wilhelm's son, sheds some light here. He wrote to the Freud scholar Siegfried Bernfeld (unpublished letter in English in the Bernfeld Archives at the Library of Congress) on August 28, 1944:

You are quite right in mentioning the strongly emotional character of the significance of these two men for each other. I have heard a good deal about this from both of them — over a long stretch of years, of course, from my father, and in a long conversation with Freud in 1929, in which he spoke with a frankness apparently not too customary to him in personal matters.

From the correspondence it appears that Freud was the more generous friend, giving himself over to the relationship almost unreservedly, whereas Fliess remained more guarded. Indeed, Freud was so preoccupied with communicating his discoveries that he seemed to have been unaware that, starting at about the turn of the century, Fliess was withdrawing from him and gradually dissolving the friendship.

Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962), one of Freud's favorite pupils and analysands, left an account of the deterioration of the relationship in her unpublished notebook:

The friendship with Fliess began to decline as early as 1900, . . . when Freud published the book on dreams. Freud had not realized this! I taught it to him. His friendship with Fliess made him reluctant to impute envy to Fliess. Fliess could not bear the superiority of his friend. Nor could he tolerate, this time according to Freud, Freud's scientific criticisms . . . Ida Fliess, moreover, . . . out of jealousy, did everything possible to sow discord between the two friends, whereas Martha Freud understood very well that Fliess was able to give her husband something beyond what she could. Fliess, according to Freud, had as passionate a friendship for Freud as Freud had for Fliess.

Some of the emerging difficulty lay in Fliess's stubbornness and possessiveness about his theories. He clung to his scheme of periodicity, by which the major events in man's life supposedly were predetermined. Freud did place some credence in Fliess's claims

*longer* have any need to uncover my personality completely, and you correctly traced this back to the traumatic reason for it. Since Fliess's case, with the overcoming of which you recently saw me occupied, that need has been extinguished. A part of homosexual cathexis has been withdrawn and made use of to enlarge my own ego. I have succeeded where the paranoiac fails!" (italics in original).

about the significance of the nose. Marie Bonaparte, in a continuation of her notebook, says:

As for a connection between the nose and the rest of the organism, there is some truth in it. Freud experienced it himself, with respect to his heartburn, which would suddenly disappear after a nasal treatment. He was able to see Fliess in this fashion assuage pain in childbirth. As for bisexuality, if Fliess was the first to talk about it to Freud, he could not pretend to priority in this idea of biology. "And if he gave me bisexuality, I gave him sexuality before that." That is what Freud told me.

Freud's awareness that his debt to Fliess was, after all, not so great came only in later years and presumably was conveyed to no one but Bonaparte. During the years of his friendship with Fliess, Freud believed the two men to be equally interested in theoretical ideas about sexuality. But the fact is that there was a striking divergence, particularly in the crucial area of the emotions provoked by human sexuality. Freud was correct to tell Bonaparte it was he who, however imperfectly, enlightened Fliess on the relevance of sexuality to medical psychology.

The actual end of the friendship was particularly difficult for Freud, and later in his life he seldom spoke of Fliess at all. There is evidence in Freud's letters (some of them unpublished) to his colleagues Carl Jung, Karl Abraham, and particularly Sándor Ferenczi that he discussed Fliess with them—but rarely, and never in the detail that Ferenczi, at least, desired.<sup>3</sup> The late Anna Freud, in a letter to me, wrote that her father never talked to her about Fliess, except very sparingly toward the end of his life, after his letters to Fliess had been discovered. She judged the reason to be that the breakup was still painful to him, even years afterward.

From their writing to their publication, Freud's letters to Fliess have traveled a long and complicated road. In the Fliess Archives in Jerusalem are copies of two unpublished letters from Ida Fliess to Freud,

3. In an unpublished letter to Ferenczi of October 17, 1910, Freud wrote, "You probably imagine that I have secrets quite other than those I have reserved for myself, or you believe that my secrets are connected with a special sorrow, whereas I feel capable of handling everything and am pleased with the greater independence that results from having overcome my homosexuality." On the following December 16, again in an unpublished letter to Ferenczi, Freud mentions Fliess for the last time: "I have now overcome Fliess, about whom you were so curious."

and two unpublished letters from Freud to her.<sup>4</sup> Ida Fliess wrote first, on December 6, 1928, shortly after the death of her husband:

Esteemed professor:

Whether you will grant me the privilege I admit I do not know, but there is a request I would nevertheless like to submit to you. You perhaps have in your possession letters from Wilhelm addressed to you before your relations became clouded. They probably were not destroyed, although they have lost their meaning to you. If that is the case, would you be good enough and trusting enough, dear professor, to place them in my hands? For I am the person who of all people has the deepest interest in them. I want them for no other purpose, I assure you. If this is not possible, could you at least lend them to me for a short time?

This request has opened an avenue to you that has long been closed to me. I hope that I will be able to approach you once more to give you my heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely yours,  
Ida Fliess

Freud responded immediately, on December 17:

Esteemed madam:

I hasten to answer your letter, although I cannot at present communicate anything decisive with respect to fulfilling your request. My memory tells me that I destroyed the greater part of our correspondence at some point after 1904. But the possibility remains that a select number of letters were preserved and might turn up after a careful search of the rooms in which I have lived for the past thirty-seven years. I beg you, therefore, to allow me time over Christmas. Whatever I find will be at your disposal, unconditionally. If I do not find anything, you will have to assume that nothing escaped the destruction. Naturally I would be happy to learn that my letters to your husband, for so many years my close friend, have found a fate that will assure their protection against any future use. In view of the circumstances, I express my sympathy in this subdued manner.

Sincerely yours,  
Freud

4. The originals are in the Jewish National and University Library, also in Jerusalem.

This letter suggests that Freud may not have destroyed all the letters he received from Fliess.<sup>5</sup> On December 30, however, he reported:

Dear madam:

I have found nothing so far and am very much inclined to presume that the entire correspondence has been destroyed. But since I have also not found other things that I certainly intended to preserve, for example the Charcot letters, I do not consider the matter closed. Naturally my promise, should I find something, remains the same.

Sincerely yours,  
Freud

Ida Fliess responded on January 3, 1929, thanking Freud for leaving her "with a glimmer of hope that some day one or more of the letters may be found."

Later Ida Fliess sold Freud's letters to her husband, as we learn in a series of letters from Marie Bonaparte to Freud.<sup>6</sup> The first of these, dated December 30, 1936, reads in part:

Today a certain Mr. Stahl came to see me from Berlin. He had gotten from Fliess's widow the letters and manuscripts from you that were in Fliess's estate. His widow intended at first to give everything to the National Library of Prussia, but since your works were burned in Germany, she gave up the idea and sold the manuscripts to this Mr. Stahl. He is a writer and art dealer and makes a very good personal impression. Apparently he received offers from America for this collection of your writings, but before he resigned himself to seeing these valuable documents go off to America, he approached me and I decided to buy everything from him. So that they will remain in Europe and in my hands, he even allowed me a lower price—12,000 francs in all—for 250 letters from you (several from

5. Anna Freud assured me that many careful searches of Maresfield Gardens had turned up no additional documents. Yet even as she told me this, I found among the letters there a previously unknown communication from Fliess to Freud. I find it hard to believe that Freud would have destroyed the letters and not remembered that he had done so, given the importance of the friendship to him and the fact that it was not until 1910, by Freud's own account, that he was able to "overcome" the relationship.

6. These letters were published (although with some omissions that have been restored here) by Max Schur in his editor's introduction to volume 2 of *Drives, Affects, Behavior, the Essays in Memory of Marie Bonaparte*. I was not able to see the original letters, which are in the Marie Bonaparte Archives of the Library of Congress and sealed until the year 2020. However, I did see the copies sent (presumably by Bonaparte) to Ernest Jones, which are today in the Jones Archives in London.

Breuer), and very long theoretical drafts in your hand in rather large numbers. I am delighted that I was able to do this, for I would regret seeing all of this sent out into the wider world. There can be no doubt that it is yours. I know your handwriting, after all!

Freud's response (January 3, 1937) reiterated that he had either lost or destroyed Fliess's letters, and at the same time confirmed their importance.

My dear Marie:

The matter of the correspondence with Fliess has affected me deeply. After his death his widow asked that I return his letters. I agreed unconditionally, but was unable to find them. I do not know to this day whether I destroyed them, or only hid them ingeniously . . . Our correspondence was the most intimate you can imagine. It would have been highly embarrassing to have it fall into the hands of strangers. It is therefore an extraordinary labor of love that you have gotten hold of them and removed them from danger. I only regret the expense you have incurred. May I offer to share half the cost with you? After all, I would have had to acquire the letters myself if the man had approached me directly. I do not want any of them to become known to so-called posterity . . .

Once more, heartfelt thanks from your

Freud

Four days later Marie Bonaparte replied from Paris:

Mr. Stahl has just arrived and turned over to me the first part of the Fliess papers: scientific essays that were scattered throughout your letters, which he collected separately and put together. The rest, the actual letters, which number about 200 to 250, are still in Germany. He intends to have someone bring them to Paris in a few weeks. The letters and manuscripts were offered to me under the condition that I never, directly or indirectly, sell them to the Freud family, for it was feared that this material, so important for the history of psychoanalysis, would be destroyed. That would not be a definitive reason for me not to discuss the matter with you. Still, you will not be surprised, for you know my feelings and ideas on the matter, that I *personally* have an immense aversion to the destruction of your letters and manuscripts . . .

My idea was the following: to acquire the letters so that they will not be published by just anybody, and to keep them for

some years, for example, in a national library—in Geneva, let us say, where there is less reason to fear revolutions or the dangers of war—with the stipulation that they not be seen for eighty or a hundred years after your death. Who could be harmed, even within your own family, should there turn out to be something in the letters?

Furthermore, I do not know what is in the letters. I will not read your letters, if that is your wish—nothing whatever. I have looked at only one letter, which accompanied one of the essays; there was nothing very compromising in it!

Can you really remember after such a long time what is in these letters? After all, you even forgot whether you destroyed the letters from Fliess or hid them . . . The breakup of this friendship must have been so painful.

You probably spoke quite freely about many people, even about your family . . . possibly about yourself [too] you said a great deal.

Moreover, I do not yet have the letters. I will only get them in a few weeks. Could I, at the beginning of March, on my way to Greece, stop in Vienna for a day or two to discuss the matter with you?

I love you . . . and revere you, and that is why I have written to you in this manner.

Marie

P.S. I want to acquire the letters on my own. That will enable us to talk about them more freely.

Stressing the need for Bonaparte to get possession of the letters, Freud emphasized that they were intimate to a remarkable degree (January 10, 1937):

It is disappointing that my letters to Fliess are not yet in your hands, but are still in Berlin . . . However, I tell myself that in eighty or a hundred years interest in the content of this correspondence will be notably less than it is today.

Naturally it is all right with me if you do not read the letters, but you must not believe that they consist of nothing but grave indiscretions. Considering the very close nature of our relationship, these letters naturally deal with anything and everything, factual as well as personal matters. The factual matters concern all the hunches and false paths connected with the birth of analysis, and in this way are also quite personal . . . For these reasons I would be happy to know that this material is in your hands

I accept with thanks your offer to come to Vienna in March, even if only for a few days.

Cordially yours,  
Freud

Bonaparte quickly told Freud that the letters were safe (January 12):

I want to reassure you right away about the Fliess letters. They are, though still in Germany, no longer in the hands of "the witch" [Ida Fliess], but already belong to Mr. Stahl, who acquired them from her along with the entire library. They are in his possession, and a friend of his will bring them here.

And on February 10 she wrote again:

Today the letters are to be delivered to me. A woman took them with her to London; they are now in Paris, and I will get them this evening.

In Bonaparte's notebook, which I found in Freud's desk at Maresfield Gardens, London,<sup>7</sup> she wrote:

Freud, when I wrote to him from Paris that Ida Fliess had sold his letters and that I acquired them from Reinhold Stahl, was very moved. He judged this act to be highly inimical on the part of Fliess's widow. He was happy to know that at least the letters were in my hands, and not sent off to someplace in America where they would no doubt have been published immediately . . . Ida Fliess was determined that the letters not reach the hands of Freud . . . I wrote Freud asking for permission to read the letters. At first he wrote saying he would prefer that I not read them. But when later, at the end of February or the beginning of March 1937, I saw him in Vienna and he told me he wanted the letters to be burned, I refused. I asked to read them to be able to judge their content, and Freud agreed. One day he told me: "I hope to convince you to destroy them." Martin and Anna [two of Freud's children] believe, as I do, that the letters should be preserved and later published. Freud was . . . interested in the letter of Thumsee [an Alpine lakeside resort], which I had shown him earlier, and said it was a very important letter [it is dated August 7, 1901]. I will show him still other selected

<sup>7</sup> The notebook in Marie Bonaparte's handwriting (dated November 24, 1937) lists the letters to Fliess and gives a brief summary in French (generally not more than a paragraph or two) of the content of each. At the end of the notebook are several pages reporting Bonaparte's conversations with Freud about Fliess.



1899 } 20 mai 1899 (Demande de décade à father  
celui de Ric)  
1 août 1899 (Reinstatement du bureau des Biers avec Thiers)  
9 novembre 1899 (Thiers se fait après l'événement de la  
des Biers, 12 juin autre avant)

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1900 } 26 janvier 1900 (Lettre pour tout de Thiers)  
1 février 1900 (Lettre pour tout de Thiers)  
11 mars 1900 (Requête sur la table de Thiers, après  
1 mois de l'absence)  
23 mars 1900 (Thiers ne peut plus avec Freud...)  
7 mai 1900 (Freud refuse la splendeur violente,  
l'écriture de Thiers)  
12 juin 1900 (La maison de Freud et la flèche en un acte)  
à la Ric

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1901 } 1 janvier 1901 (Il écrit pour la première fois en éprouve  
le besoin!)  
7 août 1901 (de l'absence) (Freud se fait pour la première fois à l'absence)  
19 septembre 1901 (Plus de l'absence à l'absence)

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24 novembre - 1er décembre 1908 : lettres de Freud et de Thiers sur Freud.  
5 juillet 1895 : une lettre de Freud sur il compare Freud à un faucon.  
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she had to leave Paris for Greece, which was about to be invaded, in February 1941, she deposited the precious documents with the Danish Legation in Paris. It was not the safest place, but . . . Paris, together with the Danish Legation, was spared. After surviving all those perils, they braved the fifth and final one of the mines in the English Channel and so reached London in safety; they had been wrapped in waterproof and buoyant material to give them a chance of survival in the event of disaster to the ship.<sup>10</sup>

In the late 1940s Marie Bonaparte gave the original letters to Anna Freud, who had them transcribed and put them at Ernest Jones's disposal during the time he was writing his comprehensive biography of Freud. In 1980 Anna Freud donated the letters to the Library of Congress, where they remain restricted from public view.

The public learned of the letters and the intense friendship of the two men when a German edition of the letters from Freud to Fliess was published in 1950, entitled *Sigmund Freud, Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse. Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, Abhandlungen und Notizen aus den Jahren 1887-1902*.<sup>11</sup> The editors were Marie Bonaparte (Paris), Anna Freud (London), and Ernst Kris (New York). The book had an excellent and extensive introduction by Kris, an analyst and close friend of Anna Freud, who was related by marriage to both the Fliess and the Ric families.<sup>12</sup> An English translation of the book was published in 1954 as *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes, 1887-1902, by Sigmund Freud*.

In both the German and English editions, only 168 of the 284 letters available to the editors were published. Moreover, passages were deleted in some letters, often with no indication of the omission. The editors explained their choices thus at the beginning of the Editors' Note: "The selection was made on the principle of making public everything relating to the writer's scientific work and scientific interests and everything bearing on the social and political conditions in which psycho-analysis originated; and of omitting or

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *Life* 1:316.

<sup>11</sup> Actually, there was a reference to the friendship in a paper entitled "The Significance of Freud's Earliest Discoveries" read by Ernst Kris to the sixteenth International Psycho-Analytic Congress in Zurich, August 1949. The paper was published the following year in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*.

<sup>12</sup> Oscar Ric, mentioned frequently in these letters, was the Freud children's podiatrist. His wife was Ida Fliess's sister, and his daughter Marianne married Ernst Kris.

abbreviating everything publication of which would be inconsistent with professional or personal confidence."

In this new edition *all* letters — including those located in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, at Maresfield Gardens, and in Robert Fliess's private collection — are presented, 133 of them for the very first time, and there are no deletions of any kind in the texts.<sup>13</sup> Only the names of patients not previously identified have been disguised with initials (under the system that Freud himself devised). And the 1895 "Project for a Scientific Psychology," Freud's construction of a theory of the mind, has been omitted because it would be difficult to improve on James Strachey's translation, published and still available in his *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

This edition of the Freud-Fliess letters can be profitably read along with several other landmark works. The most important is the first edition of the letters, here called *Origins*. Ernst Kris's introduction to that volume was a milestone in the history of psychoanalysis and is still unmatched today. James Strachey included some excerpts from the Fliess papers in the first volume of *S.E.* and provided a new and improved translation and excellent notes. Strachey is particularly helpful in pointing out later parallels in Freud's published writings, and the reader is invited to consult his volumes. Max Schur, Freud's personal physician and later a well-known psychoanalyst, translated a number of previously unpublished letters to Fliess both in his article "Some Additional 'Day Residues'" and in his book *Freud: Living and Dying*. His interpretation of Freud's relation to Fliess strikes me as the most balanced of the many available. Ernest Jones, in the course of his monumental life of Freud, gives the background to many of the events mentioned in the letters.

In spite of the fact that Freud's life was remarkably devoid of external drama, more has been written about him than about any other thinker of our time, probably because he did so much to alter the contours of the intellectual and emotional age in which we all live. Much of the discussion has focused on Freud's inner life, although virtually everything we know about that life was revealed to us by Freud himself in his published writings. Research on Freud in

13. The Appendix to this volume indicates which of Freud's letters to Fliess appeared in full in *Anfänge* and in *Origins*, which were given there in excised form, and which are presented for the first time in this edition.

creased enormously with publication of the incomplete edition of his letters to Fliess, because nowhere else did Freud write with such candor, directness, and depth about his innermost thoughts. Now, at long last — nearly a hundred years after they were written — we have a definitive edition of the complete letters. They stand as one of the high points of intellectual achievement and insight of our time.