easy to be unpractical as the ignorant Philistine[7] imagines. It were well for England if it were so. There is no country in the world so much in need of unpractical people as this country of ours. With us, Thought is degraded by its constant association with practice. Who that moves in the stress and turmoil of actual existence, noisy politician, or brawling social reformer, or poor, narrow-minded priest, blinded by the sufferings of that unimportant section of the community among whom he has cast his lot, can seriously claim to be able to form a disinterested intellectual judgment about any one thing? Each of the professions means a prejudice. The necessity for a career forces every one to take sides. We live in the age of the overworked, and the uneducated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid. And, harsh though it may sound, I cannot help saying that such people deserve their doom. The sure way of knowing nothing about life is to try to make oneself useful.

Ernest. A charming doctrine, Gilbert.

Gilbert. I am not sure about that, but it has at least the minor merit of being true.

* * *

1890, 1891

7. A member of a biblical people who waged war against the Israelites. Matthew Arnold applies the name in *Culture and Anarchy* to the complacent materialist middle classes, indifferent or antagonistic to artistic and cultural values.

SIGMUND FREUD
1856–1939

It is hard to imagine the twentieth century without Sigmund Freud. Along with Charles Darwin (1809–1882), KARL MARX (1818–1883), and Albert Einstein (1879–1955), he helped revolutionize the modern Western conception of human life and its place in the universe. For Freud, human reason was not master in its own house but a precarious defense mechanism struggling against, and often motivated by, unconscious desires and forces. His theory and practice of psychoanalysis have changed the way people think about themselves today, whether they are aware of it or not. At the same time, psychoanalysis has been controversial from the beginning because, unlike experimental science, it cannot be adequately tested, falsified, or objectified. It aims higher than—or falls short of—objective verifiability because it is a study of the very limits of objectivity itself. The impossibility of separating psychoanalysis from the biography of its founder has been used to discredit it, but in fact Freud's writings signal a significant change in the relation between autobiography and thought. They make visible in new ways the narrative challenges involved in telling the story of a life—one's own in particular. Freud's attention to language may help explain why his writings have grown in importance for literary scholars at the same time that they are increasingly criticized for diverging from the protocols of science. Yet perhaps it is also in large part because his writings exist at the limits of *both* literature and science that Freud continues to fascinate us.

Freud was born in Moravia (in what is now the Czech Republic), the first of seven children, to poor Jewish parents. His young mother, Amalia, was his father Jacob's third wife. The Freuds moved to Vienna in 1860, where Sigmund obtained all his education (with the exception of a few months in Paris). Although psychoanalysis today is associated with the "talking cure" and the theory of infantile sexuality, Freud began his career as a clinical neurologist, obtaining his medical degree in 1881. He entered the University of Vienna in 1873, at a time when Jews, who had moved to liberal Vienna in sizable numbers, were already being scapegoated for Austria's economic problems. Freud, in his *Autobiographical Study* (1925), attributed his independence of mind to his position just outside the "compact majority" (Henrik Ibsen's phrase) of German gentile culture, which he nevertheless also shared. When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938, Freud left Vienna reluctantly and under duress. In his lifetime, social liberalism had given way to the most virulent anti-Semitism—a sad confirmation of his warning against taking any notion of the progress of civilization for granted.

While working to obtain his medical degree, Freud was distracted by his broad interests in research. Among other subjects, he became fascinated by the account given by the respected physician Josef Breuer of the treatment of a particularly intelligent hysterical patient. "Anna O." invented the term "talking cure"; she is often considered the first patient of psychoanalysis, although Freud himself never treated her. Fifteen years later, Freud and Breuer would write *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) about this and later cases. In the meantime Freud met Martha Bernays, the woman he hoped would become his wife, and went to Paris. Too poor to marry, he progressed in his profession by getting a small grant to work at the famous Salpêtrière mental hospital under the supervision of the medical showman and great specialist in hysteria Jean-Martin Charcot. In 1886 he returned to Vienna, opened his medical practice, and married Martha; they had six children (three girls and three boys). From 1891 onward, the Freuds lived at Berggasse 19, where Sigmund set up his famous consulting room.

In the years leading up to his groundbreaking *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud began a formative and intellectually wide-ranging correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess, an ear, nose, and throat specialist from Berlin. In his practice, Freud gradually abandoned the hypnotic treatments for hysteria recommended by Charcot, substituting instead a form of dialogue between patient and doctor. At first convinced that many of his patients had suffered sexual abuse (or "seduction") by their fathers in childhood, he later came to realize that some of his patients' tales of sexual events were fantasies. The death in 1896 of Freud's own father perhaps increased his unwillingness to believe in paternal guilt. What he called the "abandonment of the seduction theory" has become controversial in recent decades (largely because of Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's 1984 book, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*), criticized as an abandonment of the realities of childhood sexual abuse. But the shift was not first and foremost a denial of the reality of incest; Freud saw in fantasies of incest a psychic reality, and an infantile sexuality, that had to be taken seriously in itself. In his move from realities of fact to realities of fantasy, however, Freud changed the sex of the representative subject: in his new theory of unconscious desire (the "Oedipus complex"), he substituted the desiring son for the abused daughter, the desirable mother for the guilty father. The father, in his account, was no longer a lawbreaker but a lawgiver: the enforcer of the law prohibiting incest between the son and the mother.

In order to gather evidence of the existence of unconscious forces at work in everyday life, Freud turned to psychological phenomena that were at once recognized and disregarded. His first three books—*The Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (published in a journal in 1901 and as a book in 1904), and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905)—lay out the analytical strategies that would inform the better-known *Three Essays in the Theory of*

Sexuality (1905). His theory would have been impossible without the meticulous study of the discredited forms of knowledge revealed by dreams, slips of the tongue, memory lapses, and jokes.

Freud continued seeing patients and published several extensive and now famous case studies—*Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (better known as "Dora," 1905), "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" ("Little Hans," 1909), "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" ("Rat Man," 1909), "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia" ("Schreber," 1911), and *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* ("Wolf Man," written 1914 and published 1918). Each attempts to come to terms with a difficult psychoanalytic but also *narrative* challenge: for example, Dora left treatment before Freud was finished with her, and his later footnotes allude to oversights in his understanding; Wolf Man's childhood neurosis could be analyzed only through the screen of adult constructions; and Schreber was analyzed not as Freud's patient but as the author of an autobiography. Freud's case histories offer a fascinating hybrid of certainty, doubt, and inner debate.

In addition to his research and his practice, Freud, at the suggestion of a disciple, founded the Psychological Wednesday Society (later transformed into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society) in 1902. He traveled to the United States in 1909 to lecture and receive an honorary degree from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, accompanied by his younger colleagues Carl G. Jung and Sandor Ferenczi (his lectures were subsequently published as *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 1910). The tensions—theoretical, personal, and institutional—between Freud and Jung were already growing; by the end of 1912, the two had essentially stopped speaking to each other. Freud took his revenge on his wayward disciples in his polemical "History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement" (1914). He also published a new series of lectures and a number of papers on psychoanalytic technique.

When World War I began Freud's three sons volunteered for the army, but he grew more and more critical of war as a solution to human problems. (Later, at the request of the League of Nations, Freud would collaborate with Albert Einstein in writing *Why War?* [1933].) The war deeply affected his thought, already in a new phase with the publication of his celebrated essay on narcissism in 1914. Traumatic neuroses seemed to put in question the dominance in psychic life of the "pleasure principle" that he had posited as the motive force of dreams. Even children's games sometimes seemed to give greater weight to the process of repetition itself than to the pleasurable thing repeated. It was at this time that Freud wrote his essay "The 'Uncanny'" (1919) and the longer *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). A sense of strangeness, of genuinely enigmatic forces, pervades his theory of the "death instinct" and the "repetition compulsion." But perhaps this strangeness was also a way of reconnecting with the strangeness of his original discoveries, which had grown quite familiar. The theoretical gains from this period are formulated in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). (The famous Latin names for the almost allegorical parts of the self—ego, id, superego—were bestowed by translators; Freud himself used German terms meaning "I," "it," and "over-I.")

In the 1920s Freud wrote about larger cultural forces and structures (*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1921; *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927; and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1929), provided major reformulations of his theory, and turned his attention to the problem of sexual difference. His paper "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" (1925) began to explore the question of "castration" in a new way. When children observe that some people have penises and others do not, he asserted, they assume that everyone must at first have had one, and that in some people it had been cut off. This encounter with the fact of difference is more satisfying to the little boy than to the little girl. But the "psychic consequences" are far-reaching: the boy takes seriously the father's threat of castration as the punishment for incest, thus experiencing

"castration anxiety," while the girl tries to deal with her "inferiority," thus feeling "penis envy." In later essays—especially "Female Sexuality" (1931) and "Femininity" (1932)—Freud attempted to make sense of the desires his theory allotted to women. Feminists have treated his theories with ambivalence: on the one hand, he had the merit of describing human sexuality as a *question*, not a *given*; on the other hand, his phrase "anatomy is destiny" seems in the final analysis to uphold the sexual certainties he himself questioned.

The lectures Freud wrote that include "Femininity" were never meant to be delivered; a series of operations for mouth cancer (beginning in 1923) had left him unable to perform in public. The political situation was also worrisome: Adolf Hitler had been appointed chancellor of Germany, and the Nazi Party was in control. Freud's books were among those burned in Berlin. His last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, was not completed until his own "exodus" to England in 1938. In London in 1939, his cancer worsening, Freud officially closed his practice; and, just after the Germans invaded Poland and after France and Britain declared war on Germany, Freud asked his physician to give him a lethal dose of morphine. He died in September of that year.

How did Freud practice interpretation, then, and how did his theory transform it? Although the details of each individual dream are particular to the dreamer, there are, says Freud, some dreams that occur widely and point to the existence of universal desires. Incest and its prohibition—the universal break between nature and culture, according to anthropologists—form the core of Freud's theory of unconscious desire. In our first selection from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he turns to the same literary text as ARISTOTLE for a version of the fundamental human plot: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Warned by an oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother, Oedipus leaves home in order to escape his fate, only to kill a man and marry a woman who turn out to be the very biological parents who had abandoned him as an infant in order to thwart the same oracle. Literature thus exists for Freud as a form of evidence: the play's centuries-long hold over the attention of viewers must correspond to its depiction of something universally fascinating and repressed. The truth told by the oracle corresponds to unconscious desire, fulfilling itself despite—or perhaps because of—every conscious effort to escape it. The plot of Sophocles' play also furnishes a parallel to the plot of an analysis: a patient's resistance to unconscious knowledge is like Oedipus's reluctance to learn his true identity. Freud goes on to discuss the relation between *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—both in terms of the incest taboo. In answer to the question "Why does Hamlet delay his revenge for his father's death?" Freud replies, "Because his uncle has only carried out a murder that he himself wanted to accomplish." In a few short pages, Freud thus revolutionized the reading of two major canonical texts of Western culture and placed the world of the imagination at the center of human subjectivity.

Freud's attention to new modes of meaning has been immensely suggestive for literary studies. While the relation between literature and dreams has often been noted, as in the ancient work of Macrobius (b. ca. 360 C.E.), Freud pursues the connection beyond the realm of general symbolism to lay out a kind of rhetoric of everyday dreams. In our second selection, on the dream-work, he writes that dreams are not nonsensical but meaningful. They are composites made out of the residues of individual lives chosen by the unconscious to represent the fulfilment of a wish: no simple "key" can decode them. Only the dreamer can provide a set of associations to illuminate the "dream-thoughts" behind the dream. Beneath the composite surface, which functions like a puzzle, lies the wish, the puzzle's solution. The dream-thoughts function like a "latent content" behind the "manifest content" of the dream.

Distortion and disguise fill dreams—or literary texts—because the unconscious wish is in some way unacceptable and must evade censorship. Dreams have three main sources of unavoidable distortion, he argues: condensation, displacement, and

the needs of representation. These unconscious "primary processes" are also subject to "secondary revision," the editing to which a dream is subject if the dreamer tries to remember it on awakening. Freud's description of the four rhetorical operations ("distortions") performed by dreams has been productively extended to literary texts: while the role of secondary revision there is stronger and more complex, literary texts may provide access to forces that are not directly accessible in other ways.

Freud often uses literary texts to illustrate or confirm his theory. His reading of a 1903 novella by Wilhelm Jensen (*Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen's "Gradiva,"* 1907) aims to ratify his theory of dreams; "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" (1908) expands on his description of fantasy life; in "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), he turns again to Shakespeare; and in numerous other short essays and notes Freud focuses directly on literature or art. But some of the most explicit literary demonstrations function as "secondary revisions" of the theory itself, eliding the role of literature in *forming* central concepts (the Oedipus complex, narcissism, etc.). For Freud, it is always as if a bourgeois drama is playing on the conscious stage of the psyche, while a Greek tragedy is going on somewhere else.

Freud's celebrated essay "The 'Uncanny,'" our second selection, offers both a literary application and a new theoretical direction. It contains an extensive analysis of E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story "The Sandman" (1816), in which a young man, Nathaniel, traumatized by the mysterious death of his father, falls in love with a wooden doll, Olympia, in preference to his flesh-and-blood sweetheart. Freud argues that what is uncanny about the story is related not to intellectual uncertainty about whether the doll is alive (as an article by Ernst Jentsch had speculated), but to anxiety about the cause of Nathaniel's father's death. When Nathaniel encounters Coppola, an optician, he thinks he recognizes Coppelius, a lawyer, whom he believes to have caused his father's death and who is conflated in his mind with the Sandman—a storybook figure who takes the eyes of little children who won't go to bed. These threats to the eyes are connected in Freud's mind to the castration complex (Oedipus had blinded himself on learning that he had fulfilled the prophecy). The uncanny return of these figures (the Sandman, Coppelius, Coppola) is also related to Freud's new sense of the "repetition compulsion." Dolls and inanimate objects, which for Freud are not uncanny in the story, nevertheless return to haunt the essay's discussion of "the omnipotence of thoughts" and of the supposedly surmounted childhood belief in animism.

Freud begins his discussion with the characteristics of the word *uncanny*, extensively documented through citations from a dictionary. The German *unheimlich* (unhomelike, uncanny) turns out to share a meaning with its apparent opposite. *Heimlich* (homey, familiar) can also mean "concealed, secret," and thus the opposite of the familiar and open. This process of estrangement of the familiar (of the "home") is exactly the same as the process of repression. The fear of being buried alive, for example, is a distorted desire to return to the mother's womb—the "home" of all humanity. The German term gives a clue to a process that psychoanalysis tries to understand more generally. Freud expresses astonishment that other languages lack the equivalent of what in German is such a handy word. But if all languages had the same process in the same place, that process would become a theme, a topic, and thus belong to conscious, rather than unconscious, knowledge.

The essay also addresses "aesthetics" more generally, as its first sentence announces. Indeed, it investigates what analyses of the "beautiful" and the "sublime" leave out: the disturbing, the unsettling, the uncomfortable. Freud's essay itself is far from beautiful: it wanders from topic to topic, it quotes others at great length, it places major points in footnotes, and, in general, it seems sewn together from mismatched parts. Hence, we have edited an already poorly sutured text. Yet "The 'Uncanny'" offers the reader an opportunity to follow the *process*, and not just the *result*, of Freud's thinking. Indeed, that the essay lacks "organic" form, so that readers tend to

get lost in it, contributes powerfully to its own uncanny effect. In recent years, partly as a result of Freud's essay, critics have devoted increasing attention to the Gothic in literature and to elements Freud associates with the uncanny—unexpected doubles, severed limbs, bodies buried alive, the return of the dead, magical thinking. Freud's reading of Hoffmann's story allows him to touch many theoretical bases that he, unlike many others, feels comfortable with—unacceptable authorial desires, castration anxieties, homosexual fantasies. But Freud's essay itself also makes readable the persistence of questions he dismisses, and it vividly reveals, in its wandering way, his fascination with what is escaping his grasp.

Freud's short essay titled "Fetishism" (1927), our final selection, builds on his analysis of the consequences of sexual difference. Certain men, he claims, cannot accept the evidence that the woman (the mother) doesn't have a penis. In order to fall in love with women and not become homosexual, they choose as a substitute some object that will continue to support the sexual interest they originally had in the missing maternal penis. The logic of fetishism thus involves both perceiving and denying the evidence of maternal "castration." In a very different way, the same logic of denial and displacement underlies Karl Marx's theory of "the fetishism of the commodity" (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1867; see above). There, the commodity itself appears to contain the value that is really produced by the processes of labor invisible behind it. Here, the substitute (foot, velvet, hair, etc.) appears to function like a sexual organ. In both cases there is a "gleam" around the fetish that attracts desire (sexual or commercial), as if the fetish actually contained the values that it represents.

Freud's analyses have had a fundamental impact on what we now understand as literary theory, influencing virtually every twentieth-century critic. On the one hand, Freud's radical new view of subjectivity has deeply affected the analysis of characters, authors, and readers, enabling a new understanding of split, hidden, or contradictory desires and intentions. On the other hand, for Freud literature is not just an illustration but also a source and authority for understanding those desires and intentions in the first place.

Perhaps more profoundly, Freud changed the nature of attentiveness itself. It was in listening to patients differently that Freud discovered the unconscious—a force of otherness as powerful as, but in no way equivalent to, a god. Inside every person, he said, there was *something* transmitting scrambled messages in a cryptic language, trying to break through the conscious surface of life. The "other" was in ourselves—indeed, it *was* ourselves. Despite the limitations of Freud's middle-class Viennese patriarchal assumptions, his conception of a human subjectivity fundamentally at odds with itself opened up possibilities he never dreamed of. Each person's life was documented in more than one way: official personal history (conscious remembrance and self-image) and unofficial personal history (the record of changes, traumas, desires, anxieties, and associations that might never have been conscious). Unconscious history contained impossible or forbidden wishes, repressed from the official record or simply outgrown—wishes that remained active in the unconscious and sought expression in dreams, mistakes, jokes, myths, and other discredited or discounted forms of communication. Psychoanalysis is the name for the theory and practice of their interpretation, and literary theory continues to derive inspiration from the psychoanalytic engagement with the most canonical as well as the most uncanonical of texts.

The Interpretation of Dreams **Keywords:** Drama, Interpretation Theory, Narrative Theory, Poetry, Psychoanalysis, Rhetoric, Sexuality
"The 'Uncanny'" Keywords: Aesthetics, Language, Psychoanalysis, Representation
"Fetishism" Keywords: The Body, Gender, Identity, Psychoanalysis, Sexuality, Subjectivity

From The Interpretation of Dreams[1]

From *Chapter V. The Material and Sources of Dreams*

* * *

[THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX]

In my experience, which is already extensive, the chief part in the mental lives of all children who later become psychoneurotics is played by their parents. Being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses which is formed at that time and which is of such importance in determining the symptoms of the later neurosis. It is not my belief, however, that psychoneurotics differ sharply in this respect from other human beings who remain normal—that they are able, that is, to create something absolutely new and peculiar to themselves. It is far more probable—and this is confirmed by occasional observations on normal children—that they are only distinguished by exhibiting on a magnified scale feelings of love and hatred to their parents which occur less obviously and less intensely in the minds of most children.

This discovery is confirmed by a legend that has come down to us from classical antiquity: a legend whose profound and universal power to move can only be understood if the hypothesis I have put forward in regard to the psychology of children has an equally universal validity. What I have in mind is the legend of King Oedipus and Sophocles'[2] drama which bears his name.

Oedipus, son of Laïus, King of Thebes, and of Jocasta, was exposed as an infant because an oracle had warned Laïus that the still unborn child would be his father's murderer. The child was rescued, and grew up as a prince in an alien court, until, in doubts as to his origin, he too questioned the oracle and was warned to avoid his home since he was destined to murder his father and take his mother in marriage. On the road leading away from what he believed was his home, he met King Laïus and slew him in a sudden quarrel. He came next to Thebes and solved the riddle set him by the Sphinx[3] who barred his way. Out of gratitude the Thebans made him their king and gave him Jocasta's hand in marriage. He reigned long in peace and honour, and she who, unknown to him, was his mother bore him two sons and two daughters. Then at last a plague broke out and the Thebans made enquiry once more of the oracle. It is at this point that Sophocles' tragedy opens. The messengers bring back the reply that the plague will cease when the murderer of Laïus has been driven from the land.

> But he, where is he? Where shall now be read
> The fading record of this ancient guilt?[4]

The action of the play consists in nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement—a process that can

1. Translated by James Strachey. This standard edition incorporates later revisions made by Freud.
2. Greek tragic dramatist (ca. 496–406 B.C.E.), author of *Oedipus Rex* (ca. 430).
3. A monster with a woman's face, lion's body, and bird's wings who killed travelers who could not answer her riddle; when Oedipus solved it, she killed herself.
4. Lewis Campbell's translation (1883), lines 108–9 [translator's note].

be likened to the work of a psychoanalysis—that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laïus, but further that he is the son of the murdered man and of Jocasta. Appalled at the abomination which he has unwittingly perpetrated, Oedipus blinds himself and forsakes his home. The oracle has been fulfilled.

Oedipus Rex is what is known as a tragedy of destiny. Its tragic effect is said to lie in the contrast between the supreme will of the gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them. The lesson which, it is said, the deeply moved spectator should learn from the tragedy is submission to the divine will and realization of his own impotence. Modern dramatists have accordingly tried to achieve a similar tragic effect by weaving the same contrast into a plot invented by themselves. But the spectators have looked on unmoved while a curse or an oracle was fulfilled in spite of all the efforts of some innocent man: later tragedies of destiny have failed in their effect.

If *Oedipus Rex* moves a modern audience no less than it did the contemporary Greek one, the explanation can only be that its effect does not lie in the contrast between destiny and human will, but is to be looked for in the particular nature of the material on which that contrast is exemplified. There must be something which makes a voice within us ready to recognize the compelling force of destiny in the *Oedipus*, while we can dismiss as merely arbitrary such dispositions as are laid down in [Grillparzer's] *Die Ahnfrau*[5] or other modern tragedies of destiny. And a factor of this kind is in fact involved in the story of King Oedipus. His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours—because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laïus and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfilment of our own childhood wishes. But, more fortunate than he, we have meanwhile succeeded, in so far as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers and in forgetting our jealousy of our fathers. Here is one in whom these primaeval wishes of our childhood have been fulfilled, and we shrink back from him with the whole force of the repression by which those wishes have since that time been held down within us. While the poet, as he unravels the past, brings to light the guilt of Oedipus, he is at the same time compelling us to recognize our own inner minds, in which those same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found. The contrast with which the closing Chorus leaves us confronted—

> . . . Fix on Oedipus your eyes,
> Who resolved the dark enigma, noblest champion and most wise.
> Like a star his envied fortune mounted beaming far and wide:
> Now he sinks in seas of anguish, whelmed beneath a raging tide . . .[6]

—strikes as a warning at ourselves and our pride, at us who since our childhood have grown so wise and so mighty in our own eyes. Like Oedipus, we

5. *The Ancestress* (1817), by the Austrian dramatist Franz Grillparzer. The play's protagonist unknowingly falls in love with his sister and kills his father.

6. Campbell's translation, lines 1524–27 [translator's note].

live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood.[7]

There is an unmistakable indication in the text of Sophocles' tragedy itself that the legend of Oedipus sprang from some primaeval dream-material which had as its content the distressing disturbance of a child's relation to his parents owing to the first stirrings of sexuality. At a point when Oedipus, though he is not yet enlightened, has begun to feel troubled by his recollection of the oracle, Jocasta consoles him by referring to a dream which many people dream, though, as she thinks, it has no meaning:

> Many a man ere now in dreams hath lain
> With her who bare him. He hath least annoy
> Who with such omens troubleth not his mind.[8]

To-day, just as then, many men dream of having sexual relations with their mothers, and speak of the fact with indignation and astonishment. It is clearly the key to the tragedy and the complement to the dream of the dreamer's father being dead. The story of Oedipus is the reaction of the imagination to these two typical dreams. And just as these dreams, when dreamt by adults, are accompanied by feelings of repulsion, so too the legend must include horror and self-punishment. Its further modification originates once again in a misconceived secondary revision of the material, which has sought to exploit it for theological purposes. (Cf. the dream-material in dreams of exhibiting [discussed earlier].) The attempt to harmonize divine omnipotence with human responsibility must naturally fail in connection with this subject-matter just as with any other.

Another of the great creations of tragic poetry, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, has its roots in the same soil as *Oedipus Rex*. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind. In the *Oedipus* the child's wishful phantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In *Hamlet* it remains repressed; and—just as in the case of a neurosis—we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting consequences. Strangely enough, the overwhelming effect produced by the more modern

7. [*Footnote added* 1914:] None of the findings of psycho-analytic research has provoked such embittered denials, such fierce opposition—or such amusing contortions—on the part of critics as this indication of the childhood impulses towards incest which persist in the unconscious. An attempt has even been made recently to make out, in the face of all experience, that the incest should only be taken as "symbolic."—Ferenczi ("The Symbolic Representation of the Pleasure and Reality Principles in the Oedipus Myth," 1912) has proposed an ingenious "over-interpretation" of the Oedipus myth, based on a passage in one of Schopenhauer's letters.—[*Added* 1919:] Later studies have shown that the "Oedipus complex," which was touched upon for the first time in the above paragraphs in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, throws a light of undreamt-of importance on the history of the human race and the evolution of religion and morality. (See my *Totem and Taboo*, 1912–13 [Essay IV].) [Freud's note].—[Actually the gist of this discussion of the Oedipus complex and of the *Oedipus Rex*, as well as of what follows on the subject of *Hamlet*, had already been put forward by Freud in a letter to Fliess as early as October 15, 1897. A still earlier hint at the discovery of the Oedipus complex was included in a letter of May 31, 1897.—The actual term "Oedipus complex" seems to have been first used by Freud in his published writings in the first of his "Contributions to the Psychology of Love" (1910)—translator's note.] Some of Freud's later footnotes are omitted.

8. Campbell's translation, lines 982–84 [translator's note].

tragedy has turned out to be compatible with the fact that people have remained completely in the dark as to the hero's character. The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. According to the view which was originated by Goethe[9] and is still the prevailing one to-day, Hamlet represents the type of man whose power of direct action is paralysed by an excessive development of his intellect. (He is 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'.)[1] According to another view, the dramatist has tried to portray a pathologically irresolute character which might be classed as neurasthenic. The plot of the drama shows us, however, that Hamlet is far from being represented as a person incapable of taking any action. We see him doing so on two occasions: first in a sudden outburst of temper, when he runs his sword through the eavesdropper behind the arras, and secondly in a premeditated and even crafty fashion, when, with all the callousness of a Renaissance prince, he sends the two courtiers to the death that had been planned for himself. What is it, then, that inhibits him in fulfilling the task set him by his father's ghost? The answer, once again, is that it is the peculiar nature of the task. Hamlet is able to do anything—except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish. Here I have translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind; and if anyone is inclined to call him a hysteric, I can only accept the fact as one that is implied by my interpretation. The distaste for sexuality expressed by Hamlet in his conversation with Ophelia fits in very well with this: the same distaste which was destined to take possession of the poet's mind more and more during the years that followed, and which reached its extreme expression in *Timon of Athens*. For it can of course only be the poet's own mind which confronts us in Hamlet. I observe in a book on Shakespeare by Georg Brandes[2] (1896) a statement that *Hamlet* was written immediately after the death of Shakespeare's father (in 1601), that is, under the immediate impact of his bereavement and, as we may well assume, while his childhood feelings about his father had been freshly revived. It is known, too, that Shakespeare's own son who died at an early age bore the name of 'Hamnet', which is identical with 'Hamlet'. Just as *Hamlet* deals with the relation of a son to his parents, so *Macbeth* (written at approximately the same period) is concerned with the subject of childlessness. But just as all neurotic symptoms, and, for that matter, dreams, are capable of being 'over-interpreted' and indeed need to be, if they are to be fully understood, so all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and more than a single impulse in the poet's mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation. In

9. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), German poet, playwright, and novelist.
1. *Hamlet* (ca. 1600), 3.1.87.
2. Danish critic and scholar (1842–1927); his *William Shakespeare* (1895–96) was translated into German in 1896.

what I have written I have only attempted to interpret the deepest layer of impulses in the mind of the creative writer.[3]

* * *

From *Chapter VI. The Dream-Work*

Every attempt that has hitherto been made to solve the problem of dreams has dealt directly with their *manifest* content as it is presented in our memory. All such attempts have endeavoured to arrive at an interpretation of dreams from their manifest content or (if no interpretation was attempted) to form a judgement as to their nature on the basis of that same manifest content. We are alone in taking something else into account. We have introduced a new class of psychical material between the manifest content of dreams and the conclusions of our enquiry: namely, their *latent* content, or (as we say) the 'dream-thoughts', arrived at by means of our procedure. It is from these dream-thoughts and not from a dream's manifest content that we disentangle its meaning. We are thus presented with a new task which had no previous existence: the task, that is, of investigating the relations between the manifest content of dreams and the latent dream-thoughts, and of tracing out the processes by which the latter have been changed into the former.

The dream-thoughts and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more properly, the dream-content seems like a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation. The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts. If we attempted to read these characters according to their pictorial value instead of according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error. Suppose I have a picture-puzzle, a rebus, in front of me. It depicts a house with a boat on its roof, a single letter of the alphabet, the figure of a running man whose head has been conjured away, and so on. Now I might be misled into raising objections and declaring that the picture as a whole and its component parts are nonsensical. A boat has no business to be on the roof of a house, and a headless man cannot run. Moreover, the man is bigger than the house; and if the whole picture is intended to represent a landscape, letters of the alphabet are out of place in it since such objects do not occur in nature. But obviously we can only form a proper judgement of the rebus if we put aside criticisms such as these of the whole composition and its parts and if, instead, we try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be represented by that element in some way or other. The words which are put together in this way are no longer nonsensical but may form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance. A dream is a picture-puzzle of this sort and

3. [*Footnote added* 1919:] The above indications of a psycho-analytic explanation of *Hamlet* have since been amplified by Ernest Jones and defended against the alternative views put forward in the literature of the subject. (See Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, 1910 [and, in a completer form, 1949].)—[*Added* 1930:] Incidentally, I have in the meantime ceased to believe that the author of Shakespeare's works was the man from Stratford [Freud's note].

our predecessors in the field of dream-interpretation have made the mistake of treating the rebus as a pictorial composition: and as such it has seemed to them nonsensical and worthless.

(A). THE WORK OF CONDENSATION

The first thing that becomes clear to anyone who compares the dream-content with the dream-thoughts is that a work of *condensation* on a large scale has been carried out. Dreams are brief, meagre and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream-thoughts. If a dream is written out it may perhaps fill half a page. The analysis setting out the dream-thoughts underlying it may occupy six, eight or a dozen times as much space. This relation varies with different dreams; but so far as my experience goes its direction never varies. As a rule one underestimates the amount of compression that has taken place, since one is inclined to regard the dream-thoughts that have been brought to light as the complete material, whereas if the work of interpretation is carried further it may reveal still more thoughts concealed behind the dream. I have already had occasion to point out that it is in fact never possible to be sure that a dream has been completely interpreted. Even if the solution seems satisfactory and without gaps, the possibility always remains that the dream may have yet another meaning. Strictly speaking, then, it is impossible to determine the amount of condensation.

* * *

(B). THE WORK OF DISPLACEMENT

* * *

Among the thoughts that analysis brings to light are many which are relatively remote from the kernel of the dream and which look like artificial interpolations made for some particular purpose. That purpose is easy to divine. It is precisely *they* that constitute a connection, often a forced and far-fetched one, between the dream-content and the dream-thoughts; and if these elements were weeded out of the analysis the result would often be that the component parts of the dream-content would be left not only without overdetermination[4] but without any satisfactory determination at all. We shall be led to conclude that the multiple determination which decides what shall be included in a dream is not always a primary factor in dream-construction but is often the secondary product of a psychical force which is still unknown to us. Nevertheless multiple determination must be of importance in choosing what particular elements shall enter a dream, since we can see that a considerable expenditure of effort is used to bring it about in cases where it does not arise from the dream-material unassisted.

It thus seems plausible to suppose that in the dream-work a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have a high psychical value of their intensity, and on the other hand, *by means of over-determination*, creates from elements of low psychical value new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. If that is so, *a trans-*

4. That is, multiple causal factors (a model for causality implying a network rather than the simply linear).

ference[5] *and displacement of psychical intensities* occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is as a result of these that the difference between the text of the dream-content and that of the dream-thoughts comes about. The process which we are here presuming is nothing less than the essential portion of the dream-work; and it deserves to be described as 'dream-displacement'. Dream-displacement and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams.

Nor do I think we shall have any difficulty in recognizing the psychical force which manifests itself in the facts of dream-displacement. The consequence of the displacement is that the dream-content no longer resembles the core of the dream-thoughts and that the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious. But we are already familiar with dream-distortion. We traced it back to the censorship which is exercised by one psychical agency in the mind over another. Dream-displacement is one of the chief methods by which that distortion is achieved. *Is fecit cui profuit.*[6] We may assume, then, that dream-displacement comes about through the influence of the same censorship—that is, the censorship of endopsychic defence.

The question of the interplay of these factors—of displacement, condensation and overdetermination—in the construction of dreams, and the question which is a dominant factor and which a subordinate one—all of this we shall leave aside for later investigation. But we can state provisionally a second condition which must be satisfied by those elements of the dream-thoughts which make their way into the dream: *they must escape the censorship imposed by resistance.* And henceforward in interpreting dreams we shall take dream-displacement into account as an undeniable fact.

(C). THE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION IN DREAMS

In the process of transforming the latent thoughts into the manifest content of a dream we have found two factors at work: dream-condensation and dream-displacement. As we continue our investigation we shall, in addition to these, come across two further determinants which exercise an undoubted influence on the choice of the material which is to find access to the dream.

* * *

We are here interested only in the essential dream-thoughts. These usually emerge as a complex of thoughts and memories of the most intricate possible structure, with all the attributes of the trains of thought familiar to us in waking life. They are not infrequently trains of thought starting out from more than one centre, though having points of contact. Each train of thought is almost invariably accompanied by its contradictory counterpart, linked with it by antithetical association.

5. A term that in psychoanalysis later comes to signify a displacement of psychical intensities from a person in the past to a person in the present (especially to the analyst, in the course of a treatment).

6. The old legal tag: "He did the deed who gained by it" [(Latin); translator's note].

The different portions of this complicated structure stand, of course, in the most manifold logical relations to one another. They can represent foreground and background, digressions and illustrations, conditions, chains of evidence and counter-arguments. When the whole mass of these dream-thoughts is brought under the pressure of the dream-work, and its elements are turned about, broken into fragments and jammed together—almost like pack-ice—the question arises of what happens to the logical connections which have hitherto formed its framework. What representation do dreams provide for 'if', 'because', 'just as', 'although', 'either—or', and all the other conjunctions without which we cannot understand sentences or speeches?

In the first resort our answer must be that dreams have no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts. For the most part dreams disregard all these conjunctions, and it is only the substantive content of the dream-thoughts that they take over and manipulate. The restoration of the connections which the dream-work has destroyed is a task which has to be performed by the interpretative process.

The incapacity of dreams to express these things must lie in the nature of the psychical material out of which dreams are made. The plastic arts of painting and sculpture labour, indeed, under a similar limitation as compared with poetry, which can make use of speech; and here once again the reason for their incapacity lies in the nature of the material which these two forms of art manipulate in their effort to express something. Before painting became acquainted with the laws of expression by which it is governed, it made attempts to get over this handicap. In ancient paintings small labels were hung from the mouths of the persons represented, containing in written characters the speeches which the artist despaired of representing pictorially.

At this point an objection may perhaps be raised in dispute of the idea that dreams are unable to represent logical relations. For there are dreams in which the most complicated intellectual operations take place, statements are contradicted or confirmed, ridiculed or compared, just as they are in waking thought. But here again appearances are deceitful. If we go into the interpretation of dreams such as these, we find that the whole of this *is part of the material of the dream-thoughts and is not a representation of intellectual work performed during the dream itself.* What is reproduced by the ostensible thinking in the dream is the *subject-matter* of the dream-thoughts and not the *mutual relations between them*, the assertion of which constitutes thinking. I shall bring forward some instances of this. But the easiest point to establish in this connection is that all spoken sentences which occur in dreams and are specifically described as such are unmodified or slightly modified reproductions of speeches which are also to be found among the recollections in the material of the dream-thoughts. A speech of this kind is often no more than an allusion to some event included among the dream-thoughts, and the meaning of the dream may be a totally different one.

* * *

What means does the dream-work possess for indicating these relations in the dream-thoughts which it is so hard to represent? I will attempt to enumerate them one by one.

In the first place, dreams take into account in a general way the connection which undeniably exists between all the portions of the dream-thoughts

by combining the whole material into a single situation or event. They reproduce *logical connection* by *simultaneity in time*. Here they are acting like the painter who, in a picture of the School of Athens or of Parnassus,[7] represents in one group all the philosophers or all the poets. It is true that they were never in fact assembled in a single hall or on a single mountain-top; but they certainly form a group in the conceptual sense.

Dreams carry this method of reproduction down to details. Whenever they show us two elements close together, this guarantees that there is some specially intimate connection between what correspond to them among the dream-thoughts. In the same way, in our system of writing, *'ab'* means that the two letters are to be pronounced in a single syllable. If a gap is left between the *'a'* and the *'b'*, it means that the *'a'* is the last letter of one word and the *'b'* is the first of the next one. So, too, collocations in dreams do not consist of any chance, disconnected portions of the dream-material, but of portions which are fairly closely connected in the dream-thoughts as well.

For representing *causal relations* dreams have two procedures which are in essence the same. Suppose the dream-thoughts run like this: 'Since this was so and so, such and such was bound to happen.' Then the commoner method of representation would be to introduce the dependent clause as an introductory dream and to add the principal clause as the main dream. If I have interpreted aright, the temporal sequence may be reversed. But the more extensive part of the dream always corresponds to the principal clause.

* * *

The alternative 'either–or' cannot be expressed in dreams in any way whatever. Both of the alternatives are usually inserted in the text of the dream as though they were equally valid. The dream of Irma's injection contains a classic instance of this.[8] Its latent thoughts clearly ran: 'I am not responsible for the persistence of Irma's pains; the responsibility lies *either* in her recalcitrance to accepting my solution, *or* in the unfavourable sexual conditions under which she lives and which I cannot alter, *or* in the fact that her pains are not hysterical at all but of an organic nature.' The dream, on the other hand, fulfilled *all* of these possibilities (which were almost mutually exclusive), and did not hesitate to add a fourth solution, based on the dream-wish. After interpreting the dream, I proceeded to insert the 'either–or' into the context of the dream-thoughts.

If, however, in reproducing a dream, its narrator feels inclined to make use of an 'either–or'—e.g. 'it was either a garden or a sitting-room'—what was present in the dream-thoughts was not an alternative but an 'and', a simple addition. An 'either–or' is mostly used to describe a dream-element that has a quality of vagueness—which, however, is capable of being resolved. In such cases the rule for interpretation is: treat the two apparent alternatives as of equal validity and link them together with an 'and'.

7. A mountain in Greece sacred to Apollo and the Muses and hence the region of poetry. The School of Athens: Raphael's famous fresco of this title (1509–11) depicts philosophers of very different times as if they were contemporaries.

8. Freud has previously described a dream in which he tells a patient, Irma, "If you still get pains, it's really only your fault"; it is that dream that Freud calls "the specimen dream of psychoanalysis."

For instance, on one occasion a friend of mine was stopping in Italy and I had been without his address for a considerable time. I then had a dream of receiving a telegram containing this address. I saw it printed in blue on the telegraph form. The first word was vague:

'*Via*', perhaps
or '*Villa*'
or possibly even ('*Casa*')

; the second was clear: '*Secerno*'.

The second word sounded like some Italian name and reminded me of discussions I had had with my friend on the subject of etymology. It also expressed my anger with him for having kept his address *secret* from me for so long.[9] On the other hand, each of the three alternatives for the first word turned out on analysis to be an independent and equally valid starting-point for a chain of thoughts.[1]

During the night before my father's funeral I had a dream of a printed notice, placard or poster—rather like the notices forbidding one to smoke in railway waiting-rooms—on which appeared either

'You are requested to close the eyes'
or, 'You are requested to close an eye'.

I usually write this in the form:

'You are requested to close the / an eye(s).'

Each of these two versions had a meaning of its own and led in a different direction when the dream was interpreted. I had chosen the simplest possible ritual for the funeral, for I knew my father's own views on such ceremonies. But some other members of the family were not sympathetic to such puritanical simplicity and thought we should be disgraced in the eyes of those who attended the funeral. Hence one of the versions: 'You are requested to close an eye', i.e. to 'wink at' or 'overlook'. Here it is particularly easy to see the meaning of the vagueness expressed by the 'either–or'. The dream-work failed to establish a unified wording for the dream-thoughts which could at the same time be ambiguous, and the two main lines of thought consequently began to diverge even in the manifest content of the dream.[2]

In a few instances the difficulty of representing an alternative is got over by dividing the dream into two pieces of equal length.

The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictories is highly remarkable. It is simply disregarded. 'No' seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned. They show a particular preference for com-

9. The Italian word meaning "secret" is *segreto*; the verb *secernere* means "to secrete," in the sense of giving off a secretion.

1. This dream will be found described in greater detail in Freud's letter to [Wilhelm] Fliess (the friend in question) of April 28, 1897 [translator's note].

2. This dream is reported by Freud in a letter to Fliess of November 2, 1896. It is there stated to have occurred during the night *after* the funeral. In its first wording the dream referred to closing the dead man's eyes as a filial duty [translator's note].

bining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing. Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary; so that there is no way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream-thoughts as a positive or as a negative.[3]

* * *

1900, 1929

From The "Uncanny"[1]

I

It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling. He works in other strata of mental life and has little to do with the subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics. But it does occasionally happen that he has to interest himself in some particular province of that subject; and this province usually proves to be a rather remote one, and one which has been neglected in the specialist literature of aesthetics.

The subject of the 'uncanny'[2] is a province of this kind. It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as 'uncanny' certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening.

As good as nothing is to be found upon this subject in comprehensive treatises on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime—that is, with feelings of a positive nature—and with the circumstances and the objects that call them forth, rather than with the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress. I know of only one attempt in medico-psychological literature, a fertile but not exhaustive paper by Jentsch (1906).[3] But I must confess that I have not made a very

3. [*Footnote added* 1911:] I was astonished to learn from a pamphlet by K. Abel, *The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words* (1884) (cf. my review of it, 1910)—and the fact has been confirmed by other philologists—that the most ancient languages behave exactly like dreams in this respect. In the first instance they have only a single word to describe the two contraries at the extreme ends of a series of qualities or activities (e.g., "strong-weak," "old-young," "far-near," "bind-sever"); they only form distinct terms for the two contraries by a secondary process of making small modifications in the common word. Abel demonstrates this particularly from Ancient Egyptian; but he shows that there are distinct traces of the same course of development in the Semitic and Indo-Germanic languages as well [Freud's note].

1. Translated by Alix Strachey, who sometimes adds a word or phrase in square brackets in the text for clarification.

2. The German word, translated throughout this paper by the English "uncanny," is *unheimlich*, literally "unhomely." The English term is not, of course, an exact equivalent of the German one [translator's note].

3. "On the Psychology of the Uncanny," by the German psychologist Ernst Jentsch (1867–1919).