On Reading & Rereading Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

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I am going at least at first to write autobiographically. My justification for doing so is that I regard my experience as relatively typical and hence as bearing some fraction of non-negligible, if perhaps oblique, interest. I first read Freud sixty-five years ago. I was eighteen years old, and the occasion arose in what was then offered in my intellectually conservative college as a new course. The subject was in the humanities, and it consisted of works selected from some of the many masters of mid-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature and thought. Included among them were such figures as Melville, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Henry and William James, George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, Joyce, Proust, and Kafka. Inserted somewhere in the second half of the chronological list was Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, which he originally delivered between 1915 and 1917.[1] Hence the context in which Freud was presented, and presented himself, to my largely bewildered late-adolescent sensibility was that of Western cultural, intellectual, and literary modernism. It was an advantage, I believe, to have read him for the first time among other immensely distinguished minds, writers who were in the course of radically departing from what had been generally accepted as canonical forms, conceptions, and conventions of representation – and of norms and values, including the values of civilization and of life itself.

Part of this advantage of reading and experiencing Freud as one cultural preeminence among others was

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00261

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to "place" him so to speak in a specific community of grand creative purposes. To take up one week after another such realizations as "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "Billy Budd," *A Sentimental Education*, *Notes from Underground*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Women in Love*, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Swann's Way*, *The Trial*, and so on was in point of fact to set oneself up for regular spiritual violence – for being repeatedly knocked over the head and simultaneously observing the ground disappear beneath one's feet. In this setting and company, Freud appeared as neither an oddity nor an anomaly. (Another element in these favoring circumstances had to do with the instructor who had devised this innovative course of reading. He was a youngish, very intelligent, genial, and ironic professor of English and comparative literature who made no bones about his wholehearted recognition of the power and genius of modernism, but who would from time to time temper his admiration by reading to the class a particularly choice passage from Flaubert or Dostoevsky or Freud and then pointedly ask, "Doesn't this shock you? Do you really believe what it proposes? Can you imagine yourself speaking or behaving like this?" – in effect attempting to solicit from us relatively undefended responses to the radical existential and moral challenges that modernism represented.)

As for the reading of Freud himself, it was anything but a simple matter. In the first place, he shared with the other eminent modernists a radical skepticism about overt moral claims and protestations of shock, innocence, and propriety raised by both social institutions and individuals. He was suspicious of rationalizing or exculpatory explanations of behavior and beliefs, even as he seemed to exemplify the extension of reasoned observation into the other-than-rational sectors of our existence. Among the heirs to the Enlightenment, he was at the same time a participant in the crisis of reason in which modernism in literature, culture, and thought has continued to occupy a historically exemplary place. He founded a discipline that he affirmed, and that affirmed itself, as a science while occupying itself with the other-than-rational, the more primitive, childish, marginal, and dysfunctional manifestations of mental life. He undertook to investigate certain encrypted and occulted operations of the mind; but he did so outside the clinic and the laboratory, outside of the university and academic psychology, outside of test scores and statistics, and either outside or on the margins of certain communal, professionalized, and generally settled protocols of hierarchy and respectability.

But there was something else that was peculiar about this first acquaintance with a text by Freud. As I was reading along, I found myself repeatedly pausing and for a moment inwardly remarking, "Oh, this really seems to be true! It *is* true!" Or at another stage, "This is something like truth," if not *the* truth. And simultaneously I had a virtually physical sensation-perception-feeling that my mind was turning, or being turned, although I was unable to articulate the direction of the movement. It was certainly not an entirely conscious or entirely continuous succession of mental (and quasi-physical) events. Nor was I concerned at the time with understanding it. It did not belong, however, to an order of experience that one has very often in an intellectual life. I myself have had it on only four other occasions: before Freud, when I first read Plato and Shakespeare; and a year or two later when I read, again for the first time, Dickens and Wordsworth. However, these later readings had the advantage of being already mediated by or filtered through the vivid, indelible deposit left behind by the expe-

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rience of the first three. That is to say: the effects were organic, cumulative, developmental, and at the same time no more than fragmentarily conscious. Moreover, this reading, like the others I have referred to, seems to have worked in such a way as to stimulate me to read other texts more coherently, with what appeared to be firmer grounding. Such enabling was, in part, by way of preparing in my youthful mind an embedded and preconditioning context of qualities and references, a range of verbal, affective, and conceptual markers, soundings by which I might grope my way along in the obscure, the less than fully perspicuous universe, of written articulations. To my youthful sensibility, the experience of reading such special masterpieces seemed to recruit them as personal auxiliaries and stabilizers. They appeared to help me maintain what eventually turned out to be a quite factitious sense of equilibrium and proportion as I eagerly, uncomprehendingly, and apprehensively staggered through one after another world-creating and world-annihilating intensity of literary-cultural imagination.

In some measure these occasions resembled what has been described as "the shock of recognition," but in some measure only. The recognition was not altogether a recognition. I was not quite the slave boy in Plato's *Meno*, who under the suggestive prodding of Socrates "remembered" his geometry. I discovered later on a closer analogy in the *Introductory Lectures*. It occurs in Freud's discussion of slips of the pen and misreadings. In the latter instance, Freud observes, "What one is going to read is not a derivative of one's own mental life like something one proposes to write" (70). For me, however, this initial reading of Freud had what I have to suggest was the pseudo-effect of making me feel, at least in a certain weak measure, as if the text were, so to say, deriving and shaping itself in some weird dimension from my own mental life. I was not in the least delusional; not for a moment did I think that I was the source of such insights or memorable formulations. To this extent, at the same time, I *did* resemble Socrates's slave boy. To rearrange the terms of the discourse, and to borrow a well-known insight, it was as if this magisterial work by Freud, in common with other modernist masterpieces, was reading me. Though they as a rule found me a less than engrossing subject, they awakened in me a peculiar inkling or suspicion that I, too, was somehow and in some way a text to be read, interpreted, explained, perhaps even turned into a narrative account. Freud himself, I began primitively to conceive, was a great reader, one of the cleverest ever. And his readings, along with my misreadings and readings of others might in some alternative understanding be in fact derivatives of a common mental life.

How then did I respond to this experience as a whole? How did I integrate it into my rudimentary graspings of the world? The truth is of course that I didn't integrate it and that I had virtually no consciously organized intelligence of my experience as a whole. It floated there as a huge unassimilated block of personal, literary, and cultural presentiments, a kind of textual iceberg, nine-tenths below the surface, to which I only dimly sensed I was going to return.

One further passage hints at how this event came to work its suggestiveness on me. It occurs in Lecture XXVII, on "Transference." Freud is discussing how "intellectual insight" is not strong enough or free enough to fight through the unconscious resistances that favor a repetition of the failed solution to an inner conflict by means of repression. Indeed, what turns the scale for the patient "is simply and solely his relation to the doctor. . . . [I]t clothes the doctor with authority and is

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transformed into belief in his communications and explanations" (445f). At this, I now recall, my own resistances were mobilized; all the hard-won autonomy of an eighteen-year-old was quickly brought to bear. Who is this Svengali? I remember saying to myself. Who has authorized this self-arrogation? As if he expected such a rebuke from his interlocutors, Freud goes on to repeat what he has just asserted. "In the absence of such a transference, or if it is a negative one, the patient would never even give a hearing to the doctor and his arguments." My ruffled feathers began to settle down. Freud then goes on to state, "In this his belief or faith is repeating the story of its own development; it is a derivative of love and, to start with, needed no argument." Once again I registered this sentence with virtual or quasi-physical animation; it was as if I had turned or been turned in another geographical direction, or as if a new actual perspective had begun to materialize. In this moment of a sudden amplification of insight and deepening of understanding, what had first manifested itself as an alteration of the external visual field continued to reveal itself as, in addition, an accession from within. Suspended in inner space, I continued reading:

> Only later did he allow . . . [such arguments] enough room to submit them to examination, provided they were brought forward by someone he loved. Without such supports arguments carried no weight, and in most people's lives they never do. Thus in general a man is only accessible from the intellectual side too, insofar as he is capable of a libidinal cathexis of objects; and we have good reason to recognize and to dread in the amount of his narcissism a barrier against the possibility of being influenced by even the best analytic technique. (446)

One of the things that had happened was that reading Freud's *Introductory Lectures* within the frame or context of modernist literature, and in a certain sense *as* literature, had provided considerable latitude for responses that were not primarily intellectual or exclusively cognitive: the experience of this reading, I realized quite a bit later, was at least as much quasi-transferential as it was intellectual. It was by no means un-rational, but neither was it distinctively rational much less rationalistic in the understanding that it followed standard or rigorous procedures of logicality.

Freud drove home this point again on the same page, when he veered off into his own intellectual past and brought in Bernheim, hypnotism, and suggestion/suggestibility: "it must dawn on us that in our own technique we have abandoned hypnosis only to rediscover suggestion in the shape of transference" (446). So this descendant of the Enlightenment did preserve in his practice an imp of Svengali-like "influence," if not his mystification. And it then began gradually to dawn on me, a young student of literature, that interpretation and suggestion are affiliated and contiguous, and that they are for both practical purposes and in principle inseparable. All interpretations contain elements of suggestion. They are by intention components of an agreed upon verbal exchange between two subjectivities. In psychoanalysis the two agents do not stand on an equal footing of authority, although the relation between them is nonetheless a collaborative construction. But at this juncture I will break off my recollected account, for I realize that especially in these last several statements I am certainly conflating later reflections and readings into a layered and excessively coherent narration of what was at the time a memorable and complex but existentially inchoate series of graspings, clutchings for connections and intelligibilities, along with random dissociations during which

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the circuits of my system of mental lighting flicked on and off.

I have chosen this personal anniversary year as an opportunity to revisit this formidable work and to test myself against it once more. There can be no doubt that this historic text has become a different phenomenon and, more pertinently, a different experience. It and I have both changed. It is, for example, a different text because of what Freud wrote subsequently in the twenty years that followed its first publication. It is also different because of what has taken place in the world historically, in developments in psychoanalysis itself (in whose history it occupies a nontrivial place), in the varied influence that it (as part of psychoanalysis itself) has exerted on Western culture and society, along with the global changes in both science and culture that have extended across an interval of sixty-five years. I, too, have changed along with this book. I read more slowly and deliberately than I once did, and my responses have lost some of their youthful extravagance. And of course I have read more Freud along with other things. Rereading the *Introductory Lectures* today, I was first alerted by what I recall was an earlier impression, an impression that others have also commented on. There is an ease and general elegance in Freud's style and habit of exposition and his deployment of argument that seem unique. From the outset he imagines, projects, and incorporates his audience (or readers; today the two are one) into the flow of discourse. In a clearly Socratic maneuver, he anticipates their skeptical doubts and querulous objections by inserting them into the organic movement of his disquisition. It is almost as if the reader himself were a participant in the carefully constructed theatrical scene. One easily tends to forget that an academic lecture is also a piece of theater, and that Freud's original interlocutors (as well as subsequent readers) had the double experience of imagining and hearing themselves being represented mimetically in the very discourse that was at the same moment being launched directly at them. In addition to the superiority entailed in periodically informing the audience that he already knew all about what they were thinking, Freud tries periodically both to disarm them and to take them into camp by confessing to and complaining about his own inadequacies. He is appropriately modest, but only *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Freud's predisposing habit in this text (and elsewhere) tends to reveal itself through expressions and figures of movement. The lectures themselves constitute a connected series; accordingly, Freud frequently begins by recapitulating or retraversing the course he has most recently covered. Such rehearsals, however, are not as a rule simple repetitions; they tend, rather, to be imaginative paraphrases. In these introductory transitions, as well as in the body of each lecture, Freud regularly introduces new terms and variables, alters perspectives and emphases without warning, and sometimes abruptly shifts the level of abstraction that his argument has been maintaining. The motion or movement in question is only intermittently straightforward or linear. It tends to figure as a spiral, perhaps a corkscrew, turning in arcs that simultaneously alter the plane or level at which his discourse is functioning. Such windings, adjustings, and retrospective rewordings are evidently allied to Freud's regular and reiterated confessions to the audience that he has fallen short, that he is inadequate to the challenge, the great task that he has set for himself. Perhaps it might be less circumspect to call them pseudo-confessions, because one of the indisputable results of these rhetorical strategies is to ratchet up the reader's intimation of the inordinate complexity of what Freud has in mind.

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Sometimes, however, the opposite is the paradoxical outcome. For example, when he is nearing the end of the lecture on "Wish-fulfillment," Freud steps back, as it were, to deliver a truly conclusive conclusion (224). The one "*indispensable*" element in a dream is an unconscious wish for whose fulfillment the dream is given its particular form. "A dream," he stipulates, "may thus be any sort of thing in so far as you are only taking into account the thoughts it represents – a warning, an intention, a preparation, and so on; but it is *always* also the fulfillment of an unconscious wish." A dream, he continues, is a group of mental representations, "translated into the archaic mode of thought by the help of an unconscious wish and transformed to fulfill that wish." This "one characteristic, the wish-fulfillment," is "*invariable*." (Emphases have been added in the preceding sentences.) Skepticism, moderation, restraint and intellectual tact, scientific and scholarly evenhandedness have all gone out the window. Freud is at this moment of development in his argument delivering himself of utterances that are universal, absolute, dogmatic in their certainty, and on the face of it incredible. I can imagine a member of the original audience silently demurring: you must mean "most dreams" or "many dreams" or "dreams as a rule." You don't allow for the mere possibility that a dream can exist without a wish-fulfillment in and behind it. Not even one? After all, this isn't geometry or elementary physics. And anyhow, who are you to address the universe with such presumption? Moreover, Freud was at other moments sufficiently instructed in the philosophy of science. According to contemporary philosophers, he was aware of problems entailed in the framing of hypotheses and duly resourceful and competent when it came to theory construction.[2] Indeed, in the lectures on parapraxes he directly addresses the subject: "It would be a mistake to suppose that a science consists entirely of strictly proved theses, and it would be unjust to require such a degree of probability." Genuine scientists, he remarks, are able "to find satisfaction in these approximations to certainty . . . and pursue constructive work further in spite of the absence of final confirmation" (51). And he insists repeatedly that he is not asserting that "every single slip that occurs has a sense. . . . It is enough for us if we can point to such a series relatively often. . . . It is in general true that only a certain proportion of the *errors* that occur in ordinary life can be looked at from our point of view" (60; emphasis in original).

When it comes to dreams, however, Freud will not budge; he rejects any suggestion short of certainty and refuses to give his interlocutors a millimeter of latitude. To the question of why must all dreams contain at their core a wish and its fulfillment, he can only reply: "I don't know why they shouldn't. I should have no objection. As far as I'm concerned it could be so. There's only one detail in the way of this broader and more convenient view of dreams – that it isn't so in reality" (222). That may be charming in its candor, but it is still not terribly helpful; and it is not the manner in which Freud customarily either contends or deals with critical probings, especially when his own proposals have caused them to be brought forward. It is not conducive in persuading his audience to sustain its willing suspension of disbelief, for that is indeed among the range of requirements that his grand idiom of discourse includes. My reading of these passages is supported, I believe, by how Freud concludes this section of the lecture. He turns to address the audience/reader directly:

> I can understand all this very clearly; but I cannot tell whether I have succeeded in

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> making it intelligible to you as well. And I also have difficulty in proving it to you. That cannot be done without carefully analyzing a great number of dreams...[and it] cannot be convincingly represented without what is coming later. It is impossible to suppose that, since everything is intimately interrelated, one can penetrate deeply into the nature of one thing without being concerned oneself with other things of a similar nature. (224)

In the first place, Freud seems at this point to be addressing himself almost as much as he is his audience. He is quite aware that he has been less than entirely convincing. Since in the situation he has conjured up "everything is intimately interrelated,"[3] and since it is not feasible to represent this "most critical and important point" without reference to what is coming later, both parties in this projected scene seem to be caught up or bound in a process from which there is in principle no egress. Both analyst and analysand are engaged in scampering around a hermeneutic circle until one or both are exhausted, bored, or satisfied sufficiently to cry out: Basta! Time out! Or, more familiarly, our time is up; we'll continue with this in our next session. The whole and the parts in the endless flux and reciprocity of interpreting a sacred or great historical text or an individual human utterance or association perpetually occupy the foreground of our focused attention.

Moreover, since we proceed under the assumption that "everything is interrelated," it is virtually as if we were playing chess in an unspecified multiplicity of dimensions. And finally our perplexity is further enhanced by the circumstance that we cannot in the present comprehend matter of considerable pertinence without referring to a future (in the evolving analytic situation) that we cannot know or adequately foretell. We are for this interval proverbial dogs in pursuit of our own tails.

I have brought forward this material to help characterize the less than linear, the irregular, the restless and mobile qualities in Freud's style of enquiry and exposition. Even when, as here, he seems to be temporarily floundering around, when he is locally inconsistent and advances incompatible formulations, something of more than usual interest is going on. Despite his scientific aspirations and convictions, he also seems to have come into the world with the unconscious purpose of living with the undecidable and irresolvable. He is among the royalty of the kingdom of Aporia. He once remarked to the effect that although something is a contradiction, this constitutes no impediment to its existence. Part of his achievement has to do with the circumstance that he was one of those few outstanding minds who was able to juxtapose and accommodate this peculiar style of thinking, which one finds mostly among creative writers and artists, with the central traditions of Western civilization and with the leading ideals of the Enlightenment.

I will adduce another passage that bears usefully on this constellation of tendencies. It occurs at the opening of Lecture XXIV, the ninth of thirteen discussions of the neuroses. Freud once again shifts perspectives and addresses his audience directly:

> I am aware that you are dissatisfied. You pictured an "Introduction to Psycho-analysis" very differently. What you expected to hear were lively examples, not theory. . . . [I]nstead I gave you long-winded theories, hard to grasp, which were never complete but were always having something fresh added to them; I worked with concepts which I had not yet explained to you; I went from a descriptive account of things to a dynamic one and from that to . . . an "economic" one; I made it hard for you to understand how many of the technical terms I used meant the same thing and were merely being

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> interchanged for reasons of euphony; I brought up such far-reaching conceptions as those of the pleasure and reality principles and of phylogenetically inherited endowments; and far from introducing you to anything, I paraded something before your eyes which constantly grew more and more remote. [...]
>
> Why did I not begin my introduction to the theory of the neuroses with what you yourselves know of the neurotic state. . . . Why did I not lead you step by step from an understanding of the simpler everyday forms to ... [their] enigmatic, extreme manifestations? (378)

This passage and what follows is, in my judgment, more winning, more persuasive and resonant than its predecessors. Like a considerable number of Freud's more arresting scientifico-pedagogical moments, it seems addressed almost as much to himself, or to the winds, or to the gods on Mount Olympus as it does to what was once an actual audience. It is a bit late in the day, he realizes, to examine the problem that the second half of these discussions (or Part III as he names it) is as a mode of expository discourse disjunctive from the first. There are very few interpositions of illustrative stories to help the audience along. Instead his listeners and readers have to follow by themselves the implicit narrative lines, the curves, angles, tangents, backtrackings, and hiatuses of theoretical argumentation. Moreover, the theory being quasi-systematically expounded is itself in a perpetually unfinished and incessant state of change; it is open-ended, fragmentary, unpredictably evolving, organismic. Its complex and polysemous character (along with the exigencies of coherent expression) has also induced him to interpolate new conceptual elements before he has had a chance to explain what they are. He has without warning shifted the terms of his account from one substantive register or category to another. Still worse, he has made things less than intelligible for his audience by throwing out a baffling array of different technical terms while using them to mean the same thing and interjecting some of them apparently solely "for reasons of euphony." Who is this "projector," this self-confessing intellectual swindler and con man?

But he is still not quite finished with his self-arraignment. He has bartered specific and concrete analyses for experience – remote and quite dubious speculations – on such matters, for example, as phylogenetically inherited mental capacities. In fact, the very idea of an "introduction to psychoanalysis" has gotten lost in the shuffle while he has been spending time parading back and forth on one or another of his numerous hobby-horses.

> Indeed ... I cannot even disagree with you. I am not so enamoured of my skill in exposition that I can declare each of its artistic faults to be a peculiar charm. I think myself that it might have been more to your advantage if I had proceeded otherwise; and that was, indeed, my intention. But one cannot always carry out one's reasonable intentions. There is something in the material itself which takes charge of one and diverts one from one's first intentions. Even such a trivial achievement as the arrangement of a familiar piece of material is not entirely subject to an author's own choice; it takes what line it likes and all one can do is ask oneself why it has happened in this way and no other. (379)

He concurs in the silent complaint of his auditors: his expository capacities are not transcendent; his analytic knowingness cannot transform infirmities in procedure and execution into charming idiosyncrasies. Indeed that was not his original plan, which somehow miscarried, despite all his "reasonable intentions" to the

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contrary notwithstanding. "Something in the material itself," he suggests, overcame his conscious purposes, usurped his conceptual autonomy, and diverted his expository account into unanticipated and, from the audience's perspective, obscure channels of theoretical meanderings. Even trivialities such as how to rephrase entirely familiar material manages, at least in part, to circumvent "an author's own choice." The material in question goes ahead in its own way, and one can only "ask oneself after the event why it has happened in this way and no other."

This is not the first occasion on which Freud has commented on the associative and logically discontinuous, the incontinent preconscious and even unconscious tendencies of his scientific and creative thinking. He includes them as a relevant agency in even his most abstract conceptualizations, and attributes to them both peremptory and inscrutable powers of will and insight. As far back as 1898, Freud took deliberate notice of it. He seems to have sent some draft pages of material pertinent to *The Interpretation of Dreams* to Wilhelm Fliess. In the letter that accompanies them he remarks, "It was all written by the unconscious, on the well-known principle of Itzig, the Sunday horseman. 'Itzig, where are you going?' 'Don't ask me, ask the horse!' At the beginning of a paragraph I never knew where I should end up." That this kind of proceeding should with some regularity eventuate in actual new discoveries about the human mind, discoveries that can in turn be enlisted in the service of science and truth, is almost unheard of and virtually unprecedented. The material itself has elements in it that are outside of personal and logical control. It is in the nature of the case that it is diversionary and follows its own other-than-conscious course, which cannot be ascertained beforehand. Freud is offering himself in both instances as an illustration of how even highly sequential discourse can be influenced in form and structure as well as in thematic substance by currents of mental activity that are not accessible (at that moment) to inspection and examination. He is treating himself as if he were an Other, as if he were no more than merely one more writer, a novelist, a dramatist, a critic, or even a psychoanalyst. He is also implicitly soliciting the reader to treat him as if he were in fact no more than merely one more writer. In this passage there is an uncommon blending of authenticity and audacity, and Freud succeeds in transforming what was expressed in the first place as a formal error of composition, accompanying a loss of discursive consistency and coherence to better account. What began as a self-arraignment has been transformed in the course of its interpretative articulation into an apologia as well.

Freud's notice of the diversionary tendency of both the material he deals with and his own particular manner of collaborating with that tendency returns us to certain locutionary constellations in this work. They have to do with suggestions, notions, images, intimations, metaphors, and other imaginative projections of movement, of motion through space. This is, to begin with, especially pointed in the applicable scenes for such discourse. The lecturer and his audience or auditor; the writer and his reader; the psychoanalytic dyad and its setting – they are all in good part characterized by utterances combined with types and degrees of stillness and attentiveness. The lecturer speaks, and the auditors try to listen responsively and well, not simply to listen. The reader strains silently to read as well – that is to say, as openly and yet alertly – as he can. The patient or analysand tries to listen, perceive, and report on the silent verbal and visual mental presentations that appear

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in some semblance of serial succession in his deliberately relaxed and unfocused consciousness. And it is the psychoanalyst's turn to listen well and then respond, optimally, in an appropriately elucidatory way. But the accent throughout falls on the movements of thought and feeling, while both collaborators remain relatively motionless. This idea of moving along permeates the local life of Freud's discourse. I can on this occasion call attention to a limited number of instances. Freud favors such expressions as "we might direct our interest elsewhere and enquire" (32). And he will often follow such a suggestion by stopping to state: "But before carrying out this intention I should like to invite you to follow me along another track" (36). He will frequently change direction in trailing or tracking a quarry or leading a hunt. Commenting on slips of the tongue he mentions the influence of sounds, the similarities of words and the "familiar associations" they arouse.

> These facilitate slips of the tongue by pointing to the path they can take. But if I have a path open to me, does that fact automatically decide that I shall take it? I need a motive in addition before I resolve in favor of it and furthermore a force to propel me along the path. (46)

He takes overt pleasure in choosing and setting the vectors along which his discourse will move. For example, he opens his first lecture on dreams by mentioning how, historically, both neurotic symptoms and dreams were both linked and found to have a sense or meaning. "We will not, however, follow this historical path, but will proceed in the opposite direction" (83). And he begins the next lecture by remarking, "What we need, then, is a new path, a method which will enable us to make a start in the investigation of dreams" (100). This new path or method entails in the first instance making a number of assumptions as matters of faith and good will. If you can make this moderate leap, he continues, "you can follow me further" (101). Although Freud's manner of dealing with his auditors in these lectures is in general Socratic, the *mise-en-scène* that he silently constructs as one of the frames for his discourse is peripatetic. Moreover, the surface that he traverses with his interlocutors is not the evened stones of the Lyceum, but something rougher and less worked and worked over. Indeed, he continues, he has had no intention of presenting "a smooth account with all the difficulties carefully concealed, with the gaps filled in and the doubts glossed over.... I wanted to show you our science as it is, with its unevenesses and roughnesses, its demands and hesitation ... [its] difficulties and incompletenesses" (102). In addition he has "laid down premises" that underlie the entire jerry-built undertaking, "and if anyone finds the whole thing too laborious and insecure, or . . . is accustomed to higher certainties and more elegant deductions, he need go no further with us. . . . in this quarter he will find impassable the precise and secure paths which he is prepared to follow." We are at this moment climbing in the Alps; and one of the attractive features of this entire cautionary traverse is that it applies with equal pertinence to both parties in the psychoanalytic joint effort.

At this point, it should be noted that, among other things, the path that Freud invites us to follow is also linked to the epic path pursued by Dante.

> Nel mezzo del cammin de nostra vita
> mi retrovai per una selva oscura,
> che la diritta via era smarrita

One comes to oneself in the course of a journey, but only after one has been confounded in darkness and discovered that the straight way has been lost. The path is perilous, and one needs a guide and com-

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panion to usher one into and through this enigmatic, terrifying, and undiscovered world.

Accordingly, the path is almost never straight-ahead. At each stopping place or interval one arrives at wherever one is going "by shorter or longer detours" (110). But the path also leads along lines of resistance and is hence unstable and variable in length, and a "greater resistance means that the unconscious material will be greatly distorted and that the path will be a long one from the substitute back to the unconscious material" (117). There is a passing allusion here to the Labyrinth, and to the unwinding of Ariadne's thread of associations that will lead us backward to the Minotaur, half-man, half-bull and all ferocious, unconscious desire. In addition, another constraint on the forward movement of Freud's discussion of dream interpretation is that for the most part "one has to give so many explanations ... bring up so much material in the way of associations and memories ... follow up so many by-paths, that a lecture about it would be quite confusing and unsatisfactory" (185). In theory there is no end to the associative by-paths. By-paths are not only indirect routes; they tend also to be rarely used and often overgrown. Like their successor by-passes, they may also lead us around a particular area of dense interest without ever offering us access to it, when such access was the very purpose behind our choice of either by-way or by-pass.

In other words, the textual expressions of movement tend as the lectures proceed to become increasingly foregrounded. Regression in the dream-work, for one obvious instance, is not "only a formal but also a material" (211) displacement backward in Freud's conceptualizations of space-time. Or at another point he typically opens a new session by casting a retrospective eye over "the ground we have covered so far ... [o]f how ... we came up against the distortion in dreams, of how we thought we would begin by evading it ... [o]f how, after that, armed with what we had learned from that enquiry, we made a direct assault on dream distortion and, as I hope, overcame it step by step. We are bound to admit, however, that the things we have discovered by one path and by the other do not entirely correspond" (213). The figuration here begins with military maneuverings – in 1916 how could it not? – and then shifts back to the idiom of mountaineering, itself in considerable part derived from the activities and lexicon of warfare. The paths are now plural and seem not to concur or swing toward one another. And as happens as a matter of course in Freud's expository procedures, new discoveries "only signify the beginning of fresh enigmas and fresh doubts" (211). The hesitations can also lead to stoppages and dead ends. The path can be blocked – "No Thoroughfare" – the open road ahead transformed into an immovable *Stau*, a word that visitors from abroad rapidly learn. One of the terms Freud enlists to describe such frustrating and paradoxical experiences, or motion without movement, or movement brought up short, of idling in senseless suspension, is fixation – not only in the abstract categories of time and space but along actual paths of development in individual lives.

As a consequence, as the lectures proceed, the path becomes increasingly sinuous, convoluted and indirect, and Freud turns to attaching modifiers to it as it recurs in his exposition. The path now tends to be referred to as "circuitous" or "roundabout." The interpretation of symptoms is itself one of such circuitous routes because it does not seek, in a final resort, to ascribe forbidden wishes and desires to present consciousness but to a repressed and therefore unknown domain of mental activity, the unconscious. In pressing this strategy, Freud is figuratively putting

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the symptoms into reverse. The "repudiated libidinal trends ... succeed in getting their way by certain roundabout paths ... or by submitting to some distortions and mitigations. The roundabout paths are those taken by the construction of symptoms; the symptoms are the fresh or substitute satisfaction which has become necessary owing to the fact of frustration" (350). Freud's disposition of psychoanalytic procedures has mimetic bearings on what brought our troubles about in the first place. Among much else, it contains elements of undoing but also of reiterating, of tautological circling around, of resuming after long interruption, and of continuously taking up unfinished business. And just as Dante's *Purgatory* reproduces by mimetic inversion the form and structure of the *Inferno*, so the experience of Freud's psychoanalysis in terms of memory and through the transference repeats through these distorting though unavoidable mediums, and by means of mimetic reflection, refraction, and inversion, the crooked ways by which we have come to ourselves – and to be ourselves.

Moreover, as Dante needed Virgil as an advisor and escort through hell, so Freud had already invoked that same Virgil in the epigraph to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, his own heroic account of a journey underground. In addition, he is offering himself as a fused or combined embodiment of his two epic predecessors, one pagan, one Christian, and Freud the *tertium quid*, related to both but distinct from both – and, I will add, distinct from us as well. That distinction is never more palpable than when we reflect on our own perspectival location as we accompany him along the way. On occasion we are companions strolling with him along the path. Most of the time, however, we are followers as he leads the way. Indeed, a significant part of the enduring experience, at least for me, of reading this great work is that Freud is always several steps ahead of the reader – namely, in the first instance, to be sure, of me. No matter how often I consult this text, Freud always beats me to it. I cannot keep up with him, and I can almost never anticipate what is beyond the next turn in the path. It is in vain that I follow his track as closely as I can, that I tediously dog his heels; he is reliably there, just around the corner, on the other side of the turn, ready to step out and quietly exclaim "Surprise!"

It is also in this connection plausible to suggest that Freud enjoys startling and ambushing his audience. He enjoys occasionally setting them up so he can move them back several paces. In English we have an expression called "leading you down the garden path." It involves the deception of another, albeit in a domesticated and civilized setting. Freud is a master at this entertaining and slightly insidious game. He is always leading us down the garden path, luring us circuitously forward, and then "having us" in the sense that he has already figured out where we will have to emerge. Sometimes, to be sure, Freud himself cannot find the way forward and confesses to being nonplussed – but that simply adds spice to the exercise.

More frequently, however, he resorts to a variety of persuasive manipulations to keep his audience in tow. For example, in Lecture X, "Symbolism in Dreams," he puts on what in 1916 must still have been a virtuoso performance, including numerous illustrations, mostly of sexual symbolic representations, many of them amusing and some impossible. He also refers to a range of quasi-anthropological speculations on the origins and development of human language, including the hypothetical "primal language." In his unswerving adherence to nineteenth-century evolutionary naturalism, Freud had in this instance been

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himself led astray. For both anthropological and theoretical linguistics were about to abandon historical and evolutionary paradigms in favor of systematic pursuits of how all languages and societies function in a present world – that is to say, from synchronic perspectives. Why and how Freud found himself attached to what would turn out to be anachronistic conjectures drawn from other "scientific" disciplines is another matter altogether. In any event, having just completed his high-wire routine on dream-symbolism, Freud turns to the audience and asks it a rhetorical question: why is it that this topic always entails "the problem of how it can meet with such violent resistance in educated people when the wide diffusion of symbolism in myths, religion, art and language is so unquestionable. May it not be that what is responsible is once again its connection with sexuality?" (168f).

Well, maybe so. But there are corollary considerations as well. The rhetorical craftiness here is associated with the circumstance that by the end of this dazzling display of widespread learning, ingenuity, and witty associations, the audience is so fascinated and mesmerized, so as we say "softened up" that they must be ready to jump on Freud's bandwagon while asking for "more." In addition, the audience should be securely "hooked" by the tacit flattery and equally invidious quality of the comparison passed before them at the end of the passage.

In the main, however, Freud prevails in tracking the circuitous route – "the roundabout path via the unconscious and the old fixations" – following the libido (another of his shadow fellow-travelers and guides) that "finally succeeds in forcing its way through to real satisfaction, although the pleasure attained "is extremely restricted and scarcely recognizable as such" (360). If in following the allusive track, as I have earlier suggested, neurosis is Hell, then psychoanalysis at its most efficacious is Purgatory. In addition, there is one further roundabout path that "leads back from phantasy to reality" – the path, that is, of art. Freud's ideal-type of artist is more than usually oppressed by "excessively powerful instinctual needs." He cannot achieve their satisfaction. A convergence of numerous capacities and circumstances, including sublimation and the weakness of certain repressions, facilitate his access "to the half-way region of phantasy." He "possesses the mysterious power of shaping some particular material until it has become a faithful image of his phantasy." By means of his successful deployment and exploitation of both artistic means and unconscious wishes, he elicits pleasure, gratitude, and admiration in his audience; and he has "thus achieved *through* his phantasy what originally he had achieved only *in* his phantasy – honor, fame, and the love of women" (376f; emphasis in original).

This sketchy and curtailed discussion of one local feature in what may be described as Freud's intellectual style is, however, connected to a larger structural tendency. From the beginning, Freud's intention is to represent the workings of the mind as a preponderantly connected array or series of conflicts – images and scenes of cross-purposes, contradictions, disagreeable oppositions, even of veritable warfare, and of enmity, vengeance, and deadly spitefulness permeate and crowd the text. Slips of the tongue represent "a conflict between two incompatible inclinations" (62). The dynamic model that constitutes the substructure of slips, dreams, and neurosis (that is, the actual agenda of these lectures) is fundamentally conflict-driven. A wish or desire occurs consciously or not, and meets with disapproval, censorship, and rejection; it is barred from expression, but it nevertheless persists. A compromise is struck between the contend-

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ing agents; this deal is half-successful and half-failure and is manifested in the strange phenomena of slips, dreams, and neuroses. The dynamics of this interplay of forces is also evident in the return of the repressed in a disguised and compromised set of shapes, a regular manifestation of both internal forces, the wish itself and that which repudiates it. Neurotic symptoms, dreams, and the like represent both the repressed impulses and the repressing intentions; and the compromises are between opposing currents of mental activity that mutually and concurrently interfere with one another. It is a situation that seems pre-made for a nearly universal tonality of ambivalence. This group of overlapping hypotheses constitutes the underlying theoretical structure of the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*.

The lines of thinking to which this important dimension of Freud's discourse obtains is often regarded as something of an offshoot in the mainstream of Western culture. Despite Freud's unbending materialism, naturalism, and realism, his principal innovative means of representation and analysis do not find their sole distinctive affiliations in the styles of intellection that we sum up by referring to the Enlightenment. His ways of dealing with mental phenomena have more to do with those figures represented by a reaction against the Enlightenment, by the great Romantic poets, nineteenth-century novelists, and certain philosophers. Or as the Devil in William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* robustly declaims, "Without Contraries is no Progression."

In addition, there is a particular group of German cultural-philosophic minds that Freud can be pertinently associated with: Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Max Weber. Each in his own magisterial and unmistakable manner and idiom places the conceptions of conflict, opposition, and negation both at the center and along the axes of his work. Each was post-Enlightenment, not merely by way of chronology but in the settled conviction that the world, at any rate the human-social world, does not gather to harmony or resolve itself into benign order: there are no choirs of angelic voices. And whenever two of them, Hegel and Marx, invoke heavenly music it turns out to be inauthentic, out of tune, utopian whistling in the dark, projected into the silent, echo-less future. Considered together and in company with the great poets and novelists of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century they make up the most formidable association of social and cultural criticism and commentary in and of Western civilization. In a number of understandings they constitute among themselves a kind of second mainstream in our culture. They all incline toward the oppositional and the negative, the subversive, skeptical, radical, and suspicious, the dialectical and ironic modes of sensibility and representation. They are anti-reductionist to a turn and a scandal to positivistic rules and regulations. They are all masters of reasoned argument and disputation, the centers of whose investigations focus upon the irreducibly un-rational, the contradictory and antagonistic components of individual, social, and cultural existence.

Each of them embodies a different configuration of what Max Weber called "the disenchantment of the world." Heirs to the Enlightenment of the West, they all had thoroughly interiorized the double disenchanting legacy of reason and science. The Prince kisses an entranced Sleeping Beauty, and she is delivered from the spell cast upon her by wicked elders. The touch of reason liberates us to deal on an equal footing with religious and social authority, and even to a considerable pragmatic extent with nature. By the same token, however, the world has lost its old magic. It is no longer under the guidance or the benign interventions of the Deity – much less

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of minor divinities and spiritual entities – and its wonder-making mysteries have been drastically diminished. We are alone with one another in a universe that was not made for us, which as far as we are concerned is both purposeless and indifferent. There is no genuine substitute for the old magic, but in something oddly analogous to the place it occupied, these seminally important figures have placed the non-rational and the irrational with all their contrarieties and irreconcilabilities in both individual and collective senses. Their general attitudes toward the other-than-rational seem to be similar in sustained ambivalence. They recognize it as an indisposable part of our human existence. They tend to deplore it in its excesses, and they equally deplore our also less than rational efforts to deny it, eradicate it, or divert attention away from it. They are all cognizant of its demonic powers, but they are in addition cognizant of the comparably demonic potencies of what we commonly take to be the counterforces of reason, rationality, and rationalization as we invest these with authority in our institutions and internalize them in our individual lives.

In this connection, the history of reason and disenchantment completes a cycle, catches up with itself, and hence, like transference, repeats the story of its own development. At one of the notable moments of its inception it was regarded as sorcery. The perplexed Meno accuses Socrates of "exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am just a mass of helplessness." He compares the effects of Socrates's application of dialectic to the paralyzing touch of the stingray. "My mind and my lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you." Reason, logic, and science here put in an early appearance as another form of the black arts. In the course of historical time, they came to be generally affirmed as emancipatory white magic, self-inventions that we are reasonably obliged to exploit. But also in the same course of that successful exploitation, the white magic has itself revealed that it has its own dark sides. Freud and the figures that I have conjecturally placed him among perceive that a holding action must be undertaken if we are not to be returned to spiritual darkness and bondage at higher stages of development. At this time, it remains uncertain whether that holding action will be effective.

These are a few of the considerations that I have learned to take into account in my reading and rereading of Freud, in this instance for a rereading of the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. I first read him as a modernist writer and a modernist source of truth. I subsequently learned to read him as a historical figure, whose writings and personality dominated a significant era in the development of modern psychology, medicine, and cultural theory. I also learned to read him as a clinical innovator, who developed a method for helping people to help themselves. In addition, I also first read him here in the United States, at a time when he and his institutional creation occupied positions of unrivalled influence and cultural authority. That time is past. Psychoanalysis is no longer, if it ever actually was, an institution with a single master theory and many tributary ramifications and subdivisions. It has currently devolved, at least in North America, into a plurality of mini-orthodoxies whose principal similarities sometimes seem to be their differences with one another. Its aspirations to become a general psychology have evaporated. Academic experimental psychology, neuroscience and the study of the brain, along with cognitive studies and neo-evolutionary biological theory have long since gone off on their own extraordinary courses of discovery. If

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there is to be some convergence of these sciences and psychoanalysis it most probably will not be a result of developments in psychoanalysis itself.

In one area, however, Freud and his psychoanalytic method continue to prosper. You can scarcely enter a school or college in America today without running into a "counselor." The same holds true for urban and suburban communities at large. These counselors (along with some circulating social workers) are for many intents and purposes psychotherapists, practicing without much or any training or certification. At the same time, however, empirical studies indicate that some version of the talking cure, along with appropriate medication when necessary, seems to be the most effective means of dealing with a large range of psychological and developmental problems. This is no mean feat. As a rule, people nowadays no longer see their analysts or visit their shrinks. They show up at their therapist's office or check in for advice with their counselors. However watered-down a treatment or routine of this kind may be, it is a version of a good thing, and considerably better than what existed before, which was more or less old-fashioned punitive discipline or, for the most part, nothing.

In any event, what persists and remains is Freud as an intellectual and cultural figure, a mind of heroic force and scope who appeared at a special juncture in modern history. Eminent among the eminent others I have adduced, he is a permanent accession to Western culture. He will continue to be read as far as we can see into the foreseeable future, or for as long as people continue to read – which may not be forever. His writings possess a special quality of some works of genius: they remain continually rereadable, in part because of their capacity to masquerade as somehow contemporary with our current interests and problems, although they do not thereby lose their particular historical density either. What I am saying, I suppose, is that Freud is a classic, that his writings continue to live by virtue of a conjunction of certain qualities of singular creative intensity expressed through an idiom of compelling and beautiful originality and inimitable individuality. The thematic and conceptual spectrum of his work coherently captures, summarizes, and carries forward a group of themes and problematicalities that remain with us as salient to life in its individual vicissitudes and to human life as we collaboratively experience it as a species with a historical existence.

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ENDNOTES

Author's Note: I want to thank Patricia Spacks for the idea that rereading is an experience and a conception that has been underexamined in the study of literature and of written expression in general.

1 All quotations from and references to the lectures are from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al., vols. XV and XVI (London: Hogarth Press, 1953 – 1974). Page numbers are noted parenthetically within the main text.

2 See Patricia Kitcher, *Freud's Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

3 Freud has already earlier asserted that "everything is related to everything, including small things to great" (27). In his work as a detective and tracker of clues, this is a reasonable assumption. But connection by correlation and connection by causality are distinct entities in which the linkages are of different qualities.