

## ESSAY III

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### FREUD'S FAILURE TO RECALL THE SURNAME OF JULIUS MOSEN

You know what [Josef] Breuer told me one evening? I was so moved by what he said that in return I disclosed to him the secret of our engagement. He told me he had discovered that hidden under the surface of timidity there lay in me an extremely daring and fearless human being. I had always thought so, but never dared tell anyone. I have often felt as though I had inherited all the defiance and all the passions with which our ancestors defended their Temple and could gladly sacrifice my life for one great moment in history.

—Sigmund Freud to Martha Bernays, letter dated February 2, 1886; Freud, 1960, p. 202.

My Dear Ones:

*“Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühen?”* [Know'st thou the land where the lemon trees bloom?]. . . The darkest green . . . belongs . . . to orange and lemon trees with green fruit, and when I stand up and look down into the garden I can see on the farthest trees the great orange-yellow balloons *‘im dunkeln Laube glühend’* [And oranges like gold in leafy gloom]. One of these trees has achieved a strange color effect . . .

—Freud, September 3, 1902, from Sorrento; Jones, 1955, pp. 21–22.

Dressed in a stiff straw hat, and carrying a gold-headed cane, Freud and his company climbed a steep ridge . . . (Gifford, 1972, p. 30).

—Freud at James Jackson Putnam's Adirondack camp, following his lecture series on psychoanalysis at Clark University.

On August 26, 1898, three months after he dreamt *Castle by the Sea*, Freud pens Wilhelm Fliess a guarded account of his recent failure to recall the surname of the German-Jewish poet Julius Mosen (b. Julius Moses):

You know how you can forget a name and substitute part of another for it; you could swear it was correct, although inevitably it turns out to be wrong. That happened to me recently

with the name of the poet who wrote *Andreas Hofer* (“Zu Mantua in Banden [To Mantua in Chains]”). It must be something with an au—Lindau, Feldau, of course, the man’s name is Julius Mosen; the “Julius” had not slipped my memory. I was able to prove (i) that I had repressed the name Mosen because of certain associations; (ii) that infantile material played a part in the repression; and (iii) that the substitute names that were pushed into the foreground were formed, like symptoms, from both groups of material. The analysis of it turned out to be complete, with no gaps left; unfortunately, I cannot expose it to the public anymore than my big dream (Freud, 1985, p. 324).

For ease of presentation of the following reconstruction, selected components of the guarded account are re-arranged.

***“the ‘Julius’ had not slipped my memory . . . infantile material.”***

As both McGrath (1986, p. 291) and Anzieu (1986, pp. 358–359) intimate, “infantile material” suggests strongly that Freud’s sense of guilt over his infant brother Julius’s death (Freud, 1985, p. 268) was evoked at the time of the lapse. To repeat: against his better judgment, Freud continued to believe that when he was 23 months old he had killed his baby brother with his hostile wishes; tormented by this conviction, Freud secretly resolved to redeem himself by delivering *der Kinder*, Juliuses and Sarahs, from the scourge of anti-Semitism.

***“I can not expose [the analysis] to the public anymore than my big dream.”***

Two months earlier, in response to Fliess’s reservations about his including his “big dream” in his ongoing work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud penned:

So the dream is condemned. . . . Let me know at least which topic it was to which you took exception and where you feared an attack by a malicious critic. Whether it is my anxiety, or Martha, or the *Dalles* [poverty or *misery* in Yiddish], or my *being without a fatherland?*

(Letter dated June 9, 1898; in Freud, 1985, p. 315; emphasis added.)

Five months earlier in “*J’accuse!*” (January 1898), Emile Zola denounced “*the miserable anti-Semitism,*” and prior to Zola’s bombshell,

in his famous political tract, *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl (1896) referred to anti-Semitism as *Judennot*, “the misery of the Jews.” Clearly, Freud’s deep concern over anti-Semitism informed his “big dream,” which never did surface. And given that this lost dream is associated in Freud’s mind with his (withheld) analysis of the Mosen slip, it is reasonable to conclude: Freud’s distress over that perpetual scourge is implicated in the lapse as well.

The subject of Mosen’s poem, the Tyrol’s national hero, Andreas Hofer, had rallied his fellow Tyrolese with his cry, “Men, the hour has struck!” (Freud, 1992, p. 229). Similarly, this modern freedom-fighter from Europe’s most anti-Semitic city recognizes, with the noose tightening round his people, the urgent need to act; more so, for in nine years he will be 51, “the limit,” he fears, “of [his] life” (Freud, 1900b, p. 513)—and he has yet to set foot in Rome.

**“*Zu Mantua in Banden [To Mantua in Chains]*”**

In a subsequent letter dated October 23rd, the first anniversary of his father Jakob’s death, Freud (1985), after stating that his “yearning for [Rome] is ever more tormenting,” alludes in the next sentence to his “big dream” (p. 332). According to the “contiguity rule” of psychoanalysis (Freud, 1905 [1901], p. 39), this proximity indicates that Freud’s longing for Rome and his “big dream” are intimately related. And because this lost dream is associated in his mind with the Mosen slip, it is not a stretch to assume: during the lapse, Freud’s Rome longing was stirred up. Again, before setting others, Jew and Gentile alike, free from their religious chains, which is essential for the realization of his Promised Land—an enlightened secular world where *der Kinder* live in peace with their neighbors and can move freely across frontiers—Freud would set himself free from the Law in Rome—by taking his stand before his personal totem, Michelangelo’s *Moses*, in the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli, aka the Church of St. Peter *in Chains* (cf. above, “in Banden [*in Chains*]”). Erected to house the two chains which fell from Peter’s wrists in his Jerusalem jail cell just before he was to be executed, this church had been the titular church of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who, later, as Pope Julius II (1443–1513) commissioned Michelangelo to create *Moses* for his envisioned tomb. (Despite his expressed wish, Pope Julius is entombed in St. Peter’s.) Freud must have thought it ironic that Julius II, dead almost four hundred years, had handed him the task of facing *Moses/Moses*, the successful execution of which—that is, the freeing

himself from *his chains*, the Law—could lead ultimately to the destruction of that great Pope’s church. This dreaded but essential task in that gloomy Roman church calls up for Freud the fateful descent, in Italy, into the underworld of Aeneas (cf. *Andreas Hofer*). But only up to a point would he follow Aeneas’ path: in order to save his homeless people, that legendary Trojan hero undertook his perilous descent into the underworld to *receive* instructions from the shade of his father, Anchises. By contrast, in order to save his homeless people (cf. “being without a fatherland”), Freud would undertake his perilous descent into *his* underworld—the gloomy Church of St. Peter in Chains—to *destroy* the instructions of his primal or ur-father Moses: the Torah. (Again, at the cost of his people’s Tree of Life, this tormented and conflicted Cain would redeem himself.) And, like his classical double, this Aeneas would come armed, armed with a Golden Bough—or “Lindau.”

**“It must be something with an au—Lindau, Feldau”**

Because Virgil (79–19 B.C.E.), the singer of Aeneas, was born near Mantua (cf. “Zu Mantua . . .”), this northern Italian city is often referred to as that great poet’s birthplace. In *The Divine Comedy*, with which Freud had an easy familiarity (McGrath, 1986, p. 303), Dante (1952) addresses Virgil’s shade as “Courteous Mantuan soul” [Hell, Canto II]. Though it was from an oak tree that Aeneas plucked his Golden Bough, the substitute name “Lindau” is a fitting token of Aeneas’ hell’s charm whose “leaves [and] pliant twigs are all of gold” (Virgil, 1983, *The Aeneid*, Bk. VI): adorning a linden tree are small yellow flowers; Au, of course, is the symbol for gold. Armed with his secretly plucked dazzling “Lindau” or hell’s charm—the oedipal beginnings of the idea of God—Freud possesses, he trusts, his mighty weapon and ticket to personal redemption: universal acceptance of this revolutionary notion that God the Father is but a projection onto the universe of his father as perceived by the oedipal boy would cut the ground out from religion, and, thereby, make anti-Semitism a thing of the past.

**“something ending in an au—. . . Feldau”**

Armed with his Golden Bough or “Lindau,” Aeneas descended into the underworld to the blessed home of the righteous dead or *Manes*, Elysium’s Golden Fields or “Feldau”:

Where souls take ease among the Blessed Groves  
Wider expanse of high air endow  
each vista with a wealth of light. (Virgil, 1983, Bk. VI.)

Freud's Golden Fields, the gloomy Church of St. Peter in Chains, is his battlefield. For there, he would free himself from the Law by taking his stand before Michelangelo's terrible *Moses*; again, this statue embodies, Freud superstitiously believes, the spirit or shade of the biblical Moses. In other words, the world's greatest representation of that great man is a symbol in the same manner that the Communion Wafer or Host is a symbol for Roman Catholics (such as his Czech nanny who in his tiny Catholic birthplace, Freiberg in Moravia, had instilled her Jewish charge with a Roman Catholic sensibility): *Moses* is Moses; that is to say, this magnificent 8 ft., 4 in. representation of Yahweh's Lawgiver possesses all of that venerable prophet's qualities, including his terrible radiance or *mana* [cf. "Zu Mantua "] that had so unnerved the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 30:35)—and which Freud (1921) will refer to in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*:

Even Moses had to act as an intermediary between his people and Jehovah, since the people could not support the sight of God; and when he returned from the presence of God his face shone—some of the *mana* had been transferred on to him (p. 125).

In *The Divine Comedy*, Virgil's shade, acting as Dante's guide to the underworld, informs Dante that because Moses "did not have baptism" the shade of Moses had been suspended in those Golden Fields, that is, until Christ descended and lifted that great man's shade to Paradise (Hell, Canto IV). At any one time, depending on which of his two religious sensibilities, Jewish or Roman Catholic, is stirred up or operative, Freud's Lord is either Yahweh or Jesus Christ, and inasmuch as he expects his Roman Catholic proclivities to break through in the Church of St. Peter in Chains where everything would come to a head, it is worthwhile to return to the Botanical Monograph (March 1898), specifically to Freud's free-association to the dream-element "a dried specimen of a plant":

In my preliminary [secondary school] examination in botany I was . . . given a Crucifer [*Kruzifere*] to identify—and failed to do so [*und erkannte sie nicht*]. My prospects would not have been too bright [*Er ware mir schlecht ergangen*], if I had not been helped out by my theoretical knowledge [*wenn nicht meine theoretischen Kenntnisse mir heraus geholfen hatten*]. (Freud, 1900b, pp. 171–172; [Freud, 1900a, p. 177]).

A crucifer, a flowering plant with four equal petals arranged crosswise, is a fitting token of Christ (and of his Church). The evocation of his failure at the Sperl Gymnasium to identify a “Crucifer” (“given a Crucifer to identify”), signifies this haunted Cain’s anticipated struggle against acknowledging [*erkannte. . . nicht*], in the Seat of Catholicism, Jesus Christ as His Redeemer. Freud pins his “prospects” on his secret “theoretical knowledge” [*meine theoretischen Kenntnisse*]. But if God the Father is not merely an “exalted father” (Freud, 1910, p. 12), and He *is* Jesus Christ, then at the Last Judgment when Christ “shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27), Freud’s “prospects . . . would not [be] too bright”—indeed they would be, as he well knows, “*schlecht*” (Freud, 1900a, p. 177, above) or “wretched” (*Cassell’s New German Dictionary*, 1906, rev., 1914). Even though Virgil’s shade informs Dante that it had witnessed Jesus lift Moses’ shade to Paradise, it’s easy for me to imagine Freud envisioning himself encountering that great man’s shade in the very setting, the setting of the righteous dead—the Blessed Groves or *Feldau*—that Anchises had directed Aeneas’ attention to the future line of his son, Julius (Iulus Ascanius), the Romans. For after all this Aeneas, too, would have an enlightened “Julius” or “Julian” line, a line which is “just—not by constraint of law, but by choice” (Virgil, 1983, *The Aeneid*, Bk VII, p. 202). To repeat: the realization of his passionately longed-for “Julius” line would *undo* Freud’s “killing” Julius, for so long as his enlightened brotherly line lives, his baby brother Julius lives! By itself, this—its grandest promise—makes Freud’s mighty Golden Bough, the oedipal beginnings of God the Father, as a scientific construct suspect—not to mention the other promises his “Lindau” guarantees: the realization of his avenging Hannibal fantasy, the destruction of the new Romans, that seed-bed for anti-Semites, the Roman Catholic Church; the deliverance of *der Kinder* from anti-Semitism; self-redemption; and, by becoming the new moral authority or Lawgiver (“Know Thyself”), immortality.

This striver, is he then just another deluded messianic pretender?

**“*Zu Mantua in Banden [To Mantua in Chains]*” (another look)**

By the time Freud pens his guarded account (August 26, 1898), Herzl’s Jewish detractors were denouncing the Zionist leader as a false messiah—a characterization, which, Freud, self-aware as he is, understands may very well apply to him. (The first major Zionist convention, the Second

Zionist Congress, will convene three days later in Basle, Switzerland.) In *View of the Tiber* (date unknown), one of his dreams “based upon a longing to visit Rome,” his analysis of which he withholds, Freud (1900, p. 194) views from a railway carriage the Pont Sant’ Angelo, a bridge favored by messianic pretenders (Scholem, 1971, p. 12). [In rabbinical lore dating from the second century the Messiah is already on earth: *waiting in hiding*, he sits among the beggars and lepers at the entrance to Rome (Seltzer, 1980, pp. 307–308).] One such pretender who in rags sat by the bridge was Shlomo Molcho (Waagenaar, 1974, pp. 153–154), whose path to martyrdom prefigured that of Andreas Hofer: in 1532, two years after proclaiming himself the Messiah of the Jews in Rome, Molcho, on orders of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, was taken *in chains to Mantua*, where, after being condemned by the Inquisition, he was burned at the stake; similarly, almost three hundred years later, Hofer, on orders of Napoleon, was taken *in chains to Mantua*, where, after a sham trial, he was executed by a firing squad on February 20, 1810. (To the very end, in the face of imminent execution, Hofer, as had Molcho, remained defiant.) Though no evidence seems to exist indicating that he was familiar with the son of *Conversos* who became “famous in the annals of Jewish history and martyrdom as Solomon [Shlomo] Molcho, the pseudo-Messiah” (Roth, 1932, p. 68), it is conceivable, if not likely, that as part of his detailed, four-year preparation for *Moses/Moses*, and out of fear that he is just another deluded pretender, Freud would have studied the lives of the various false messiahs—especially one named Schlomo or Shlomo (Solomon). For, as Freud (1913), who was born Sigismund Schlomo, will note, obsessional neurotics believe there is “a transcendental connection between all bearers . . . of the same name” (56; p. 112), and being himself an “‘obsessional type’” (Freud, 1974; p. 82), he knows this from personal experience. At any rate, if his Golden Bough is but a hollow wish-fulfillment and there really is a *Gott in Himmel*, then this Schlomo, having lost his way, could expect not redemption but justice, that is to say, either Yahweh’s dreadful visitations or, if the Lord is Jesus Christ, hell’s wretched torments.

**NOTE**

In early 1937, Marie Bonaparte purchased Freud’s letters to Wilhelm Fliess from Reinhold Stahl, the Berlin bookseller who had acquired them from Fliess’s widow, Ida. Soon after, in late February or early March, Freud informed Bonaparte “he wanted the letters burned”

(Bonaparte's notebook entry; in Freud, 1985, p. 9). Aware that they would shed unparalleled light on the origins of psychoanalysis, and knowing that he intended to destroy these letters dating from 1887 to 1904, Bonaparte refused to re-sell them (at half-price) to her friend and mentor. Had she complied, the Mosen lapse would have been lost—as had the “big dream,” which “must have been something ‘political’” (Schur, 1966, p. 75; Freud, 1985, pp. 318–319, n.1).

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