

Disturbing the Sleep of the World at Berggasse 19

A Monologue

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SYNOPSIS

“ . . . I welcomed my one year-younger-brother (who died within a few months) with ill-wishes and real infantile jealousy, . . . his death left the germ of guilt in me.”

--SIGMUND FREUD to WILHELM FLIESS, in letter dated October 3, 1897.

As per his request, his B'nai B'rith lodge brothers ('Sons of the Covenant') visit Sigmund Freud at his home and office at Berggasse 19. After they agree to secrecy, the father of psychoanalysis relates and analyzes a recent dream of his in which they, his "brethren," are "unkind and scornful of him." Freud's analysis of this short dream* reveals that it was informed by his secret intention to establish an atheistic brotherly world, in order to atone for having 'killed' his infant brother Julius: at the cost of Judaism, this tormented Cain would save Der Kinder, other Juliuses--and himself. By play's end, Freud's tormented soul is laid bare; not only to his 'brothers' but to Freud as well.

* Related in Freud's letter of April 25, 1900, to Wilhelm Fliess; in *The Completed Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, translated and edited by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Harvard University Press, 1985, pp. 410-11.

CAST

SIGMUND FREUD

Looking like a vigorous 44, the 5ft. 6-inch, 127 pound father of psychoanalysis (1856-1939) has penetrating brown eyes--eyes which have been known to strike terror in disciples who crossed him. Impeccably groomed, Freud is wearing a gray 3-piece suit.

SETTING

Sigmund Freud's study, Berggasse 19, Vienna, Austria.

The set should approximate Rita Ransohoff's description in E. Engelmann's book of photos, Berggasse 19 Sigmund Freud's Home and Offices, Vienna 1938, University of Chicago Press, 1981:

The couch is piled high with pillows so that the patient would be in a near-sitting position, but eminently comfortable . . . The patient could cover himself with the shawl at the foot of the couch to protect against a possible draft. Freud would sit behind the couch in an easy chair with a footstool. The room is cluttered in late Victorian style, but in an organized and 'interesting' manner. The antiquities have their place; they do not take over. The wall covering is plain, almost dark; patten and color come the Oriental rugs on the floor, the couch, and its adjacent wall.

TIME

3 PM, Sunday, April 29, 1900.

FREUD

Fellow lodge brothers, thank you for coming this afternoon to my home and office at Berggasse 19, and where I developed my science, psychoanalysis. What I reveal this afternoon, I ask that you share with neither friends nor strangers. . . Good. A little over five years ago, I read in shocked dismay and with mounting irritability, as you also must have, Theodor Herzl's newspaper accounts of the court-martial of Captain Dreyfus in December 1894 and his later public degradation on the parade ground of the Ecole Militaire on the fifth of January, 1895. (Slide of this incident)

The sudden fall of Dreyfus now wasting away on Devil's Island over that fraudulent charge of treason, selling French military secrets to the Germans, and the vicious attacks on Jews throughout France are sobering. For this disgusting behavior in the Land of the Declaration of the Rights of Man signify a return of the Middle Ages when our people were blamed for all epidemics. . . . An irresistible feeling of solidarity with our increasingly threatened nation began to mount within me. . . What can I offer my people? How can I save the children? (At writing desk) That's it, the answer lies in the psychology of the Christian! (an awareness)

Brothers, it is not because we allegedly killed Christ that Christians hate us; to the contrary, they hate us because we gave them Christ. Disavowing his hatred for his religion which obliges him to renounce his aggressive impulses and his illicit sexual desires, the good Christian displaces his unconscious hatred on to the ones responsible for his misery, the Jews--for Paul and the Apostles--all Jews--handed Christians their chains, that is, their demanding religion. And since the misery can be traced back to the Torah-- and it is with a heavy heart that I say this--the Torah, our Tree of Life, it must go. Hear me out! . . .

New generations who have not been exposed to religion, and who have been raised in kindness and taught to value reason, will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone, the seed of Abraham included. Yes, such an enlightened world may be an illusion, but were it to become a reality, is it an illusion? The voice of reason may be soft, but, brothers, it will not rest until it gets a hearing. (Lights cigar.)

Smoking will be the death of me, but without my cigars I can not work. This past Tuesday, you listened with attentive interest to my talk on Emile Zola's novel, *Fruitfulness*; this fine novel closes with the following humane vision:

And the divine dream, the generous utopian thought soars into the heavens; families blended into nations, nations blended into mankind, one sole brotherly people making of the world one sole city of peace and truth and justice! Ah! may eternal fruitfulness ever expand, may the seed of humanity be carried freely over frontiers.

As you by now have probably surmised, I intend to prepare the ground for such a world, an enlightened world where the *Der Kinder*--the seed of Abraham--can at long last move freely over frontiers. But why am I now revealing my ambition to you? The answer is, I have no choice. And it is for this reason that I have asked you here on such short notice. . . . On Monday evening, the night before my lecture, I had a dream about the upcoming talk. This dream I relate in a letter to my former best friend Wilhelm Fliess, an ear, nose and throat specialist in Berlin. His unforgivable behavior on our last private get-together definitely shattered our relationship.

Turning on me, he said that my work is without value, and that I am nothing but a thought-reader who merely reads his own thoughts into other people. No sooner had I posted the letter--this was on Thursday, three days ago--than I regretted having done so. For this short dream will be broken sooner than later, and it is better that you, my dear brethren, learn of the dream's significance from me than from my future biographers or hostile critics--let alone from Fliess. Here is what I had written my former best friend:

(The following could be mimed, as below:)

Yesterday I gave a lecture on Emile Zola's novel *Fruitfulness* to my B'nai B'rith lodge. I am always ill prepared; actually, I start only an hour before.

(Feverishly writing on a legal-sized pad)

During the night . . . I dreamed inordinately of this lecture. I explained that I must go home to fetch the book, lost my way (as though lost in a maze), the weather was miserable (battling the elements) The brethren, moreover, were

unkind and scornful of me-- (head-lowered, he backs away)
conduct that is apt, quite surely, to reduce my interest in the
success of my lecture. (Crumples his prepared talk.)

Here, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (Holding it), my new book
which will disturb the sleep of the world, I show-- with dream
specimen after dream specimen (flips pages)--that dreams are wish-
fulfillments. And if dreams are indeed driven by wishes, why, my
B'nai B'rith brethren, would I wish for your hostility, for your
scornful hostility?... Consider this reading: at last I am showing my
hand-- no longer am I just wishing to destroy the Torah, I am taking
action, actively engaged in destroying the Torah, our Tree of Life. So,
naturally, you, other 'Sons of the Covenant' --are "unkind and scorn-
ful of me,"-- which is, "Conduct that is apt," indeed! Our desert
fathers would have stoned me to death--and not just in a dream.

In "I Accuse!," his courageous Open Letter to the President of France
in defense of Dreyfus, Zola refers to antisemitism as the 'miserable
antisemitism"--We are in agreement then that the dream's
'miserable weather' is a screen for that miserable poison and
scourge of our people, antisemitism.

Zola, now there is a mensch! The question is, Have I, like him, the
courage, the moral courage, to withstand the contempt and hatred
of my own nation, especially from ~~who~~ you who mean so much to
me, and who in the dream are "unkind and scornful of me"?--
This impious hero who has "lost his way,' perhaps he should just
"go home," return to the Book of Books, the Torah, (Lifts a Bible)
and leave the 'miserable weather' to Theodor Herzl and to his band
of Zionists.

Psychoanalysis has taught us that self-concealment is impossible.
Leading up to the dream, I tell Fliess, who is a co-religionist, that
"I am . . . ill prepared." Thus, unwittingly, I hint at my evil design,
that I am prepared to do away with Judaism, the faith of our
fathers. Nine years ago, on my thirty-fifth birthday, May 6th 1891,
my gray-haired father, Jakob, presented me with this, the Bible of
my childhood, the illustrated Hebrew-German Philippon Bible.

(*A mental projection*: A slide based on an actual photo of Freud, age
8, with his father.; Jakob is seated, with a book in his lap, and little Sigi,
wearing a suit, stands beside his father, to his left. But here, the slide is
projected on the back of Freud while that of his father projected higher
on the wall, like a god. The projection is in sepia tones.)

As I suspect many of you were, I was captivated by its woodblock prints, especially the frontispiece showing Moses with rays of light shooting up from his forehead. That glorious figure was, I believed, Der Liebe Gott Himself. And now this birthday boy is bent on destroying this, the Book of Books, and burying, for once and for all time, Moses. For that great man of our people lives, only so long as the Law lives. ...After being guarded for so long, that I am opening up to you I can scarcely believe- (Brilliant lightning & thunder.) Such a storm Michelangelo might have made! . . . My father died four years ago at the age of 81. On his deathbed, that sweet soul looked like the great Italian freedom fighter Guiseppi Garibaldi. . . . Many of his redshirts were Jews, you know. After his death, feeling uprooted (Heads for antiquities covered desk.) I began to study myself in detail, especially through my dreams . . . And became my most interesting patient.

(Seated, cigar in left hand, he mimes writing with a pen in his right hand. Behind him is a bookcase, from which Janus, the 2-headed Roman God, looks down on FREUD. Janus's shadow falls across his face. Adjoining the bookcase is a table with more of his antiquities collection, and on which there is a large, partially concealed photo of Moses. Brilliant lightning and a peal of thunder startle Freud momentarily.)

And, in the following year, 1897, just three years ago, to my horror, I discover that I am a Cain:

(FREUD projects: We hear Kaddish, the 'prayer for the dead'. Clutching her dead infant, her upper body moving back and forth, AMALIA FREUD, 22, looks for answers into JAKOB'S eyes--Why? Why?--as JAKOB, 42, tries comforting her.)

(Freud recovers)

This is difficult . . . I welcomed my baby brother with infantile jealousy and hateful wishes . . . I wanted this intruder to be gone. Well, when Julius was eight months old, this Cain got his hateful wish. Julius would have been forty-two. (Lifts a boy figurine) We remaining children are like a book--the brothers, the covers, and the five sisters, the pages. A book with a missing first page who will never experience the joy at the Passover Seder of asking that sweet soul, our father, "Why is this night different. . . ?" Mah Nishtanu he lylaw ha-zeh, m'call ha-laylos? . . . (Replaces 'boy')

From childhood on, I have suffered from spells of deep depression. I couldn't account for these black moods and debilitating headaches--especially at this time of year. . . the Sunday before last was the 15th of April, the date that Julius died in 1858. I was 23 months old. Without my knowing it, his death left the germ of guilt, unremitting guilt-- I was impelled to make decisions, take actions. For instance, the choice of our first home. The first three of our six children were born in the apartment. Commissioned by Emperor Franz Joseph, the building is on the site of the ill-fated Ringtheatre--four hundred burned to death. The rent is used to provide for their children. This building, as you probably know, is called The House of Atonement.

Tormented by the return of my murdering Julius, I resolve to make an atonement by leaving the *Der Kinder*, future Juliuses and Sarahs, a world where "the miserable antisemitism" is unknown. And that same year, 1897, I pluck my ticket to redemption, the Oedipus complex, the young boy's passionate wish to kill his father so as to possess his mother sexually. . . On our second move-- I was four--on the overnight train from Leipzig to Vienna, I saw my mother naked.

(FREUD *projects*: A slide of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* is projected: FREUD'S lips and tongue move; the slide then lands on FREUD as he reaches up to touch his own breast, Venus' breasts are superimposed on his. He fondles his breast, catching himself before his passion overwhelms him: A BIG moment; there could be music.)

Where was I? Ah yes, plucking my mighty weapon (raises gold-handled cane) with which I would deliver *Der Kinder*, future Juliuses and Sarahs, from the miserable antisemitism, namely the Oedipus complex--the young boy's passionate wish to kill his father so as to possess his mother sexually. For, you see, brothers, God the Father once strode on earth (Walking briskly) --in the form of the mighty Oedipal Father. Long ago, in pre-history, this all-knowing and all-powerful papa was thrown out on to the universe and became our Heavenly Papa, who, similarly, punishes and rewards his children. In other words, our heavenly father is a mere projection out on to the universe of the young boy's idealized perception of his father magnified a thousand-fold--that is to say, God is nothing but an exalted father. . . This revolutionary insight that religion is an infantile fixation which can

be traced back to a longing for the father--and with which I would cut the ground from under religion--I hold close to my breast. For were I to broadcast prematurely the Almighty's humble beginnings, the antisemites would have a field day, "This filth that God is but a mere illusion could only have sprung from the diseased mind of a syphilitic Godless Jew!"-- Psychoanalysis would then be nipped in the bud-- and this tormented Cain kisses goodbye his redemptive Promised Land, an enlightened world in which at long last *Der Kinder*, Juliuses and Sarahs, can move freely across frontiers. First, though, I must gain recognition, be recognized as an authority, if not the authority, on so-called civilized man-- which is a tall order, especially since I am virtually unknown, and, moreover, seem to lack that special something --charisma or personal magnetism--to draw others, followers, to me. . . . Still, I am always my mother's "golden Sigi."

(FREUD *projects*, showing his mother, AMALIA, in the scene related below: Infant Sigi is in a wicker cradle. Initially, for a moment, the slide does not find the right place and AMALIA is projected on Freud, struggling with his hand against the 'blinding' light, as if the light were a caul.)

One day in a pastry shop, in my birthplace, the small Catholic town of Freiburg in Moravia, a Czech peasant-woman told my mother, Amalia, who was only twenty, that because I born in a caul, a membrane on my head, that she with her first-born had brought a great man into the world. . . "You are destined to become a Great Man, my golden Sigi." Even now she doesn't let me forget it. Little does she know that in order to realize my great destiny, it is essential that I kill the great man of our people, Moses.

Now in the letter which, like a fool, I had written *Fliess*, the dream--let's call it my 'Promised Land' dream--is sandwiched between, on the one hand, my "longing for Rome" --to be precise, I start the letter with (reads) "Well, do you realize now that Rome can't be rushed?"-- and, on the other hand, a reference to a psychiatric journal article dealing with a treatment for neuroses which I had co-developed, namely the Cathartic Method of Cure, and which I shall describe shortly. This three-layered sandwich consisting of (1)my longing for Rome, (2) my 'Promised Land' dream and (3) the Cathartic Method of cure is-- by itself--not potentially catastrophic for my project. But when seen in the light of my other

letters to Fliess, that, that is another matter entirely.

For, brothers, self-betrayal oozes through our very pores, let alone our words--and, like Talmudic scholars, my future biographers and critics will pore over these letters in detail--that is, if I don't get my hands on them first and burn them.

Now in the Cathartic method of Cure, "The psychiatrist"

(Reads from a journal.)

leads the patient's attention back from his symptom to the scene in which and through which the symptom arose. And having thus located the traumatic scene, we remove the symptom--

In other words, when a patient relives a traumatic event, there is a purging of the emotions which sustain the neurotic symptom that arose from that traumatic event; hence, the symptom collapses and the patient is cured of his neurosis. As for the neurosis that I intend to free myself from--indeed must free myself from in order to get on with my ambition-- it is this: submission to the will of the father, be he Jakob Freud, Moses, or Jehovah Himself. And to rid myself of this childlike attitude, I will board the train for Rome, cross the threshold of the Church of St. Peter in Chains and, there, take my stand--my defiant stand--before the greatest symbol of Moses, the terrible Moses of Michelangelo. . . And this is my concern--once my obsession with the statue becomes known--and it will! for mortals are not made to keep secrets--it will be only a matter of time before it is discovered that my creation, psychoanalysis, like Herzl's Zionism, is essentially a Jewish national affair, that is, a means to save the Jews-- and, poof! there goes my 'Promised Land.'

But one can always hope for miracles.

Yes, as I state at the beginning of the letter, "Rome can't be rushed." For I must come prepared And to steel myself for my dreaded trial in the Eternal City, I visit the large plaster copy of Moses in the Museum of Fine Arts regularly. On one such visit--it was getting dark and just before closing time, the museum was all but deserted--the statue's angry scorn seemed directed squarely at me, as though I myself belonged to the mob of backsliding Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf. At that moment, I fell away, fainted.

At first, I attributed this to my heart condition. But the fainting

spell, I came to understand, was an unconscious self-punishment--
 (Takes off jacket, lies on famous couch)

No apparent movement or consciousness. I look like a corpse--
 don't I? I want Moses dead only to become dead myself instead. In
 other words, my deathlike swoon signified my own death--which,
 brothers, is an apt punishment, wouldn't you say? Yes, just like that!
 the realization of my Promised Land could be sabotaged--sabotaged
 by my bad conscience! (Puts jacket on)

Let us now turn to the situation in the gloomy Church. I am bent
 on 'killing' Moses in order to possess Mother Earth; structurally,
 then the situation is reminiscent of the period in my childhood
 when I had wanted to kill my father in order to possess my mother.
 Accordingly, when I take my defiant stand before the massive
 statue, all 8ft-four inches of him, er, of it, I anticipate the
 resurrection of those feelings and attitudes of long ago-- the
 patricidal rage; the terror while awaiting the anticipated retribution,
 castration; the inclination to passively submit to the will of my
 father; my love and longing for my beloved father, the passionate
 desire to have him love and comfort me; and, all of this in addition
 to guilt, potentially overwhelming guilt of a guilt-ridden son.

(Goes to shelf holding the 2-headed god Janus)

Janus, your two stone faces still look down on me very haughtily.

May I? (Lifts Janus from shelf.) Like you, O double--headed god
 of the threshold, I must be ever vigilant, or I would never
 resolve my father problem. One momentary lapse, and it is all
 over. But if this self-cure takes, then I would be a person in
 my own right, for I will have set myself free from the Law; more
 importantly, this hero then could get on with setting others free
 from their religious chains, in order, ultimately, to turn into a
 reality his Promised Land-- an enlightened, just and livable world
 where antisemitism is unknown. . . . Janus, O Roman god of new
 beginnings, a plea--watch over this Godless Jew.

(Replaces Janus; turns to 'brothers')

That I may be deluding myself, I understand, and only too well.
 Because it promises so much --(enumerating with fingers) the
 elimination of the miserable antisemitism; self-redemption; the
 exacting of vengeance, that is, the destruction of the hated Roman
 Catholic Church-- my brilliant revelation about God the Father,

must be, as a scientific theory, suspect. That is, my mighty club, the Oedipus Complex, might be, itself, what I claim God to be, a hollow wishfulfilment--my, my, Godsend, may be too good to be true-- And der Liebe Gott Yahweh of the Bible Story-- and His terrible Justice -- may be exist after all. But I have no alternative. Were I to abandon Der Kinder to the misery, I would lose the will to live! No, I must act! And if not now when?

(Putting on skull cap and Tallith, he takes his defiant stand before Moses--invisible to audience)

Moses, you have molded me and every Jew. By assuring us that we are God's chosen people, you have made us confident, optimistic, even proud. (Lifts gold cane handle to his chin.) To you, Moses, we Jews owe our tenacity of life.

But Moses, if Yahweh exists, where is His strong hand?

His Chosen People, haven't they suffered enough? Why doesn't der Liebe Gott end, once and for all, the miserable persecutions? . . . Moses, given the unremitting misery which mounts daily, how can you justify governing my life with your Divine Law? Moses, the time for Jewish martyrdom is over--Der Kinder, little Juliuses and Sarahs, they must be saved!--

(As FREUD starts removing Tallith and skull cap, brilliant lightning and a thunder clap occur; FREUD cringes...)

The terrible radiance that was transferred from Yahweh on to Moses on Mt. Sinai! I am doomed!-- Collect yourself! You must not faint!

(Shielding himself with The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud holds his ground.)

I prevailed, I did not faint! (Disbelief!)

(Addresses his 'Brothers'):

Brothers, you creep away from me as though I've got a fatal, contagious disease. Do not abandon me!

(Spotting what had been The Interpretation of Dreams but is now a Marble Tablet, he turns the Tablet to face him.)

The stone, it is inscribed in gold . . . Is this true? My one and only Law has replaced the Torah!

(Upon seeing his face reflected in the Tablet, he reacts:)

Uncanny! So this is why, brothers, you creep away. The divine and terrible radiance of Moses that so frightened our fathers at Mt. Sinai-- it has been transferred on to me. . . . What's this? I'm limping. Well, it's no sin to limp, especially for one who now is in possession of the field as the new Lawgiver, with but one Command, (Raises Tablet over head for all to see his one Law):

"Know Thyself!"

Who can stop me now? Followers will flock to me. One moment I'm a Jewboy from the miserable streets of Vienna, and the next the new Lawgiver, the new Moses whose Law, "Know Thyself!," is the Law of the Land, of Mother Earth! . . .

('Coming down' from this manic excitement:)

Then I, I, destroyed the Torah and killed Moses that Great Man. No! (Flooded with guilt, he cries out:)

Let this be a dream, a bad dream. . .

(The floor shakes, smoke rises as if from a fiery pit.)

The punishment of Korah and the other Israelites who rebelled against the authority of Moses! (Horrorified). Yahweh, is He once again sending down that terrible Visitation?--"They, and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit." No! Martha and Der Kinder! What have I done?! My little ones, Mathilde, Martin, Oliver, Sophie, Ernst, Anna, your papa, he has doomed your sweet, precious mama--he has doomed you all! . . . This must not happen! I will undo this! . . .

(About to dash his Tablet to the ground--)

Collect yourself! The weather, it is still miserable --

(Restraining himself from dashing the Tablet, a mighty effort, he clutches the Tablet to his breast, and moves back and forth as though he's davenning in the synagogue--And which is reminiscent of the above memory of Amalia Freud mourning the death of baby Julius in her arms. As his radiance fades, Freud again hears Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. Anguished, looking up to the heavens, he cries:)

Why, why, have You forsaken me?!

(The alarm goes off.)

CURTAIN
END OF PLAY