

## The "Wayward Gleam of the Lyrical": Freud's "Hostility Towards the Id"

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**A**s a theorist who called upon the poets "as reporters and witnesses of a knowledge which he sought to explain in scientific speak, only to find, time and again, that his own explanations and case studies approached the forbidden register of poetic texts" (Nägele 242), Freud suggests that truth depends on language. In contrast to the consistent science-worshippers of his day (Freud himself being a rather inconsistent example), he, mostly even in spite of himself, testifies to the existence of a kind of truth which art – as represented by poetic language – can often capture more readily than his *Psychoanalyse*. In a letter written to him in 1916, Lou Andreas-Salomé perfectly summarizes his dilemma:

Über das, was Sie im letzten Brief über Ihre "aussetzende produktive Stimmung", die Unsicherheit in Bezug auf sie, schreiben, mußte ich nachdenken. Obgleich sie das "Künstlerische", dem derartiges eher zustoßen dürfte, so sehr von sich ablehnen, scheint es doch fraglich, ob ein Werk wie das Ihre so völlig ohne das überhaupt erschaffbar gewesen wäre [...]. Aber ganz hiervon abgesehen, ist es eine nachdenkliche Frage, inwiefern der Gegenstand Ihrer Forschung, das *Ubm*, es vielleicht notwendig in sich begründet, nur mit solchen Aussetzungen [der produktiven Stimmung] an sich heranzulassen. Denn mit wie wissenschaftlicher *Methode* das auch geschieht, – es selber wird immer dahin tendieren, ihr zu entsinken, wie Träume dem Wachen entsinken [...]. (Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 57)

"Für einen, der kein Künstler ist und es gar nicht anstrebt" (Freud on himself; qtd. in Pfeiffer 57), Freud's supposedly scientific style (and method) at times comes close to an "artistic" one not unlike the poets'. In "Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens *Gradiva*", conceived in 1906 and published a year later, Freud ponders about himself and the "Dichter"



that "[w]ir schöpfen wahrscheinlich aus der gleichen Quelle" (SA 10: 82). He goes even further when he then grants that the poets are "die tiefsten Kenner des menschlichen Seelenlebens" (10: 15). However, he spells out his view on the hierarchy of the two disciplines or art forms, psychoanalysis and literature, with regard to cognitive "superiority" most clearly in the following statement: "die Wissenschaft besteht nicht vor der Leistung des Dichters" (SA 10: 51). Although happily counting himself among the scientists – "wenn der Verfasser [Freud] nämlich seine eigenen Arbeiten auch der Wissenschaft zurechnen darf" (SA 10: 51) – Freud then nonetheless announces his allegiance to the poet, who would otherwise "allein gegen die gesamte Wissenschaft stehen" (SA 10: 51). As many psychoanalysts followed Freud in thus entering into co-operation, and sometimes even competition, as it were, with "the poets", let us look further into what the early Freud had to say about "den Dichter".<sup>1</sup>

A year after his study on Jensen's *Gradiva*, Freud wrote his lecture "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" (SA 10:169-179). Here, he suggests what the main points of contact between the creative writer and the analyst are: an awareness of both the need to work through childhood and of the importance of child's play for creativity. In that lecture Freud also maintains that all formal, or aesthetic, pleasure to be gained from "Dichtung" is merely a *pre*-pleasure subordinate to an *actual*, greater pleasure (Freud's emphasis; SA 10: 179). The latter is derived from the content of a work of art rather than from its form, while consisting in the "Befreiung von Spannungen in unserer Seele", and is claimed to be brought up from "tiefer reichenden psychischen Quellen" (SA 10: 179). Thus, it is possible to say that Freud viewed the "message" of a poem as a "massage of the soul", as it were. Although he acknowledges that what to him is but the "surface" of a text, namely its style, contributes largely to the fact that poetry can communicate before it is fully understood, in this early essay, Freud clearly grants "content" an importance surpassing that of style. In his essay "Poetry and Psychoanalysis", Adam Phillips reminds us that to Freud this content is, first and foremost, characterized by courageous honesty. "The art of poetry [...] is the art of being happily unacceptable in public, of making known one's otherwise forbidden desires" (8), he writes, unfortunately rather narrowing than paraphrasing Freud's definition of "die eigentliche *Ars Poetica*" (Freud, SA 10: 172).<sup>2</sup>

In his lecture Freud propounds that, come adolescence, daydreams take over from child's play, albeit only in unhappy, unsatisfied people: "der

Glückliche phantasiert nie, nur der Unbefriedigte" (SA 10: 173).<sup>3</sup> However, because these daydreams are all either of an ambitious or of an erotic nature and therefore socially unacceptable, they, in turn, invest the already unhappy daydreamer with a sense of guilt. The difference to child's play consists in the daydream renouncing the child's play's imitation of real objects, but also in that newly acquired shamefulness. Although they are far removed from the naiveté of the daydream, Freud maintains that the poet's creations can still be linked to patterns of such "Phantasieren". In both activities, "der Wunsch [benützt] einen Anlaß der Gegenwart [...], um sich nach dem Muster der Vergangenheit ein Zukunftsbild zu entwerfen" (175).

At this point, and especially in the context of this definition, Freud's authoritative assertion that, as quoted above, the daydream is always the exclusive domain of the unhappy, unsatisfied person should be contested. Admittedly, especially when practised too much, "Phantasieren" potentially "stellt die Bedingungen für den Verfall in Neurose oder Psychose her" (Freud, SA 10: 175). It is also true that poets, who arguably do cherish daydreams too much, "don't tend to be our models for mental health" (Phillips 20).

Surely, however, human beings need to create such a sense of the intertextuality of past, present and future – the very definition of daydreaming, according to Freud – within their lives. How else could anyone be able either to combat a sense of life's meaninglessness or reach any satisfaction at all; in short, why would one go on? And surely poetry, that most sophisticated form of daydreaming (or "nightmaring", in some of its best cases), creates a sense of connection to what are, essentially, poeticised but basic human qualities in the reader. Indubitably Freud himself, as shown both in his many references to past and future in his very work and in his extensive leaning on and borrowing from such daydreaming poets, is no exception. Notably, in this instance it is Nietzsche whom he might have borrowed from, as this quote from *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, chapter one, page one, clearly shows: "Der schöne Schein der Traumwelten, in deren Erzeugung jeder Mensch voller Künstler ist, ist die Voraussetzung aller bildenden Kunst, ja auch, wie wir sehen werden, einer wichtigen Hälfte der Poesie."<sup>4</sup> However, the wisdom of Silenus that for humans the (unattainable) very best thing is not to have been born at all, and the second best, to die as quickly as possible can, according to that same book of Nietzsche's, only be counteracted by art,



as the veil hiding the abyss that is nature's cruelty and the indifference of the universe. Although Freud elsewhere in fact endorsed the notion of art as life-enhancing and even life-preserving, in the case of his two early essays on poets, he, unlike Nietzsche, almost appears to be packing art away in a drawer marked "pathology". This is shown clearly in "Der Wahn und die Träume [...]" when he says of *Gradiva's* protagonist, Norbert Hanold:

Doch hatte vielleicht in wohlmeinender Absicht die Natur ihm ein Korrektiv durchaus unwissenschaftlicher Art ins Blut gelegt, eine überaus lebhaft Phantasie, die sich nicht nur in Träumen, sondern auch oft im Wachen zur Geltung bringen konnte. Durch solche Absonderung der Phantasie vom Denkvermögen mußte er zum Dichter oder zum Neurotiker bestimmt sein." (19)

Phillips reminds us that many of the more recent psychoanalytic theorists such as Winnicott or Bion, themselves perhaps operating from a Nietzsche-influenced postmodern perspective, would not agree with such an illusion of meaning, either. Phillips himself, however, interprets Freud's lecture as providing the ground on which to argue that we are all poets, that "poetry becomes a description of what the mind does" (20). According to this same lecture, the very existence of plans, memories and ambitions could also be understood as a pathological symptom of neuroses and psychoses. Is Phillips thus implying that we are all riddled with mental illness? Perhaps, but in any case this is a helpful swipe at the exclusionary, and literally normative, notion of normality; and as such wholly in the spirit of Freud himself, who frequently took care not to oppose such – illusory – "normality" to "illness".<sup>5</sup>

Yet, here is a point of criticism directed at both Freud and Phillips: to someone interested in lyric poetry, it is a disappointment that Freud's whole lecture spans a mere nine pages, only a third of which actually deal with the "Dichter", a flaw which Freud is fully aware of, but does little to remedy: "Sie werden sagen, daß ich Ihnen von den Phantasien weit mehr erzählt habe als vom Dichter [...]. Ich weiß das und versuche es durch den Hinweis auf den heutigen Stand unserer Erkenntnis zu entschuldigen" (178). Also, whereas in "Der Wahn und die Träume [...]" Freud was still careful to point out the potential "Schädigungen, die mit der Aufnahme des künstlichen Einheitsbegriffes 'der Dichter' verbunden sind" (15); a

year later, he wrote against his own advice, as it were, and entirely failed to differentiate between different individual poets.

Both of these flaws seem to have escaped Phillips' attention entirely, along with the even more disappointing fact that this "Dichter" is by no means the lyric poet nowadays implied by the German word, and by Phillips' discussion. Freud's "Dichter" turn out to be "die anspruchsloseren Erzähler von Romanen, Novellen und Geschichten", i.e., writers of popular prose, in whose work the hero is "Seine Majestät das Ich" (176).

This seems to derive from a tangible awe of lyric poetry, where the Id reigns supreme, shown in the fact that whenever lyric poets are mentioned, Freud shrouds himself in mystical, very un-scientific commonplaces and excuses: either those poets simply hold a "Geheimnis" (179), or – always a favourite excuse of Freud – his "Erörterungen" (179) have conveniently come to an end. Both Phillips and Michael Molnar have their views on possible reasons for such evasive behaviour on the part of the father of psychoanalysis. "Freud's unease about lyric poetry in particular may stem from his sense of it as virtually unmediated emotion"<sup>6</sup>, Molnar offers by way of explanation. This view corresponds to "Psychopathische Personen auf der Bühne", where Freud makes one of his very few direct mentions of the word "Lyrik": "Die Lyrik dient vor allem dem Austoben intensiver vielfacher Empfindungen, wie seinerzeit der Tanz [...]" (SA 10: 164). Molnar continues:

Judging both from his library and his habit of quotation, Freud never much appreciated lyrical poetry. His poetical citations originate in a limited repertoire of poets, Goethe, Schiller or Heine, and they tend to carry non-lyrical (aphoristic, jocular or philosophical) messages. [...] Moulded by his education in the classics and an early admiration for Milton, his taste in poetry seems to have been primarily in favour of syntactic weight and semantic density rather than for the wayward gleam of the lyrical.

"Indeed, the uses of literature in psychoanalytic texts, starting with Freud himself, betray a certain unease", Phillips writes. "The creative artist is at once essentially human but also has got something the analyst just hasn't got. The artist represents for Freud the limits of psychoanalysis" (12). Phillips, unlike Molnar, attributes this to the fact that "the writer, unlike the psychoanalyst, is the person who has not been dominated by



someone else's vocabulary" (viii). It seems probable by now that Freud indeed shied away from what he perceived the vocabulary of the Id, which to him could only be accessed by lyric poets; whereas he often, and at times seemingly with regret, counted himself among scientists.

Let us now turn to the poet's link with daydreams and child's play, as according to Freud. Poets are likened to neurotics in their shared compulsion to honesty, but revert to the shameless daydreaming of childhood. They turn embarrassment and, arguably, unhappiness into pleasure for their readers by breaking the taboo of sharing highly subjective "Erregungen". This is also why – in my "shamelessly" acknowledged adaptation of the lecture to lyric poetry despite Freud's own reluctance to do so (176) – the most "truthful" poems seem the most opaque, as described in a highly illuminating way by Hannah Arendt: "Wahrheiten, wiewohl sie niemals dunkel sind, sind weder von Natur transparent noch durch weitere Untersuchung transparent zu machen. Sie erhellen, aber sie können selbst nicht weiter erhellt werden – so wie es in der Natur des Lichts liegt, daß es Helle verbreitet, aber selbst nicht erhellt werden kann" (343). An "opaque" poem can thus be imagined like a condensed ray of light, illuminating one spot alone while leaving a sea of darkness around itself, including the "artificially [or artfully?] screened-off"<sup>7</sup> source of that light.

Within a decade after the lecture on daydreaming, Freud's writing had matured considerably. In this excerpt from a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, it comes very close to "Dichtung" – both in its thematic aspects and in the rather lyrical metaphorical form; and in the sense of something both concentrated and concentrating. In a way indicative of his possible influence on Arendt, Freud admits in a letter to Andreas-Salomé from May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1916: "Ich weiß, daß ich mich bei der Arbeit künstlich abgeblendet habe, um alles Licht auf die eine dunkle Stelle zu sammeln" (qtd. in Peiffer 50). Here, Freud is again implying the fundamental difference of his approach to that of Andreas-Salomé – he being an analyst who is blinkered by definition, and she tending more toward, and having a gift for, synthesis.<sup>8</sup> He then "admits" his reluctance to acknowledge himself as a writer of what could also be "literature". He states that he forgoes literature, which he defines as "Zusammenhang, Harmonie, Erhebung und alles, was Sie das Symbolische heißen", for two reasons.

Firstly, to him the concept of unity operating within this world is already self-evident: "Was mich interessiert, ist die Scheidung und Gliederung dessen, was sonst in einen Urbrei zusammenfließen würde"

(1915 letter; qtd. in Peiffer 36). Secondly, experience taught him that such "literary" ambitions toward the symbolic can contribute to the distortion of "das zu Erkennende, wenn [sie es] auch verschöner[n]" (1916 letter; qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 50). However, he is still aware of the need for the integration of such isolated findings "in seine Beziehungen": "meine für das Dunkel adaptierten Augen vertragen wahrscheinlich kein starkes Licht und keinen weiten Gesichtskreis. Doch bin ich nicht Maulwurf genug geworden, um mich nicht an der Ahnung des Hellen und Umfassenderen zu erfreuen, oder gar, um dessen Existenz zu verleugnen" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 50).

From a mere few sentences from two letters, one can thus crystallize Freud's view on the differences between psychoanalytic theorist and creative writer, personified in Freud himself and Lou Andreas-Salomé, respectively. In short, it is the difference between the "particularist" and the "generalist". To come back to Freud's metaphor: the "particularist" is compared to a mole with a restricted, if not entirely obscured, view of the outside world. He is burrowing into the ground, on a vertical level, interested in depth. The "generalist", contrarily, strives upward, bird-like, constantly flying above a "wolkenbedeck[te] Landschaft".<sup>9</sup> The aim is to penetrate the clouds, to gain a horizontal view on "Alles" (Rilke's and Andreas-Salomé's concept of the unity of all things living or dead) or, in less grandiose terms, to wade into the "Urbrei" – depending on whose vocabulary we wish to borrow.

However, Freud himself implies in the statement quoted above how inextricably linked both kinds of cognitive endeavour are. His very style, which borrows rich metaphorical allusions and evocations from the supposedly separate realm of "the symbolic", is further proof of its intertwinedness with his own, and comparatively more theoretical, preoccupations. Phillips would agree, postulating that psychoanalysis "is most interestingly poised [...] not simply between science and poetry, but between poetry and epistemology" (34). Fourteen years later, on the last page of *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Freud already expressed discomfort about his mole-dom: "Allein mich drängt es, auch einmal mit den Worten des Schillerschen Tauchers auszurufen: 'Es freue sich, wer da atmet im rosigen Licht.'" Lastly, let this statement, made on the occasion of Freud's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, speak for itself: "The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied" (qtd. in Phillips 9).



Provided by this link with psychoanalysis, criteria emerge with which one can define "a poem, according to Freud". Its creator must have a Freudian "mole" within him or her, reaching deep down into their own wells of psychic life and experience. However, there also has to be enough of a Saloméan high-flying "bird" who links this experience with, as Freud says, "its relations", making it shareable, offering the possibility of meaning to an "Other" to it. This implies that the text itself must go beyond the personal experience which occasioned it, it must transcend the individual's limits enough in order to speak to another individual: "psychoanalysis is a method for self-knowledge [...], poetry is not" (Phillips 32) – necessarily. It can be that, but, more importantly, it can also provide others with a way of knowing what it is not to be oneself. The "Flaschenpost", as Celan called his poems, "wird an Herz-Land gespült" if the poet has a gift for investing an individual voice in the paramount concerns of his time and place – and making them weather the test of other times and places. August Stahl, writing about Rilke that he is "ein Kind seiner Zeit in den meisten seiner Theorien" (36), would agree when he then goes on to differentiate those theories from his "Kunst: das Zeitbedingte und ganz Persönliche so zu verwandeln [...], daß auch Menschen mit ganz anderen Schicksalen sich in seinem Werk wiederzuerkennen glauben und sich verstanden fühlen" (36). To Stahl, then, in contrast to Phillips, poetry is a method for self-knowledge – albeit for that of its reader.

To Freud, it is honesty about feelings which might usually be considered shameful rather than the aspiration to an absolute truth that is the marker of a good poem, provided we remain faithful to his "separatist" view<sup>10</sup> and are not talking about style yet. This lets Phillips build his bridge from poetry to psychoanalysis. In his view, the honesty informing and inherent in the former helps to overcome, in Freud's words, the "Schranken [...], welche sich zwischen jedem einzelnen Ich und den anderen erheben" (qtd. in Phillips 8). In the same way, Phillips argues, psychoanalysis should be less interested in "its slavish quest for [truth and] academic respectability", but more in "truthfulness [and fellow feeling]" (xiv). Both disciplines or art forms, he maintains, cannot be institutionalised as "one doesn't necessarily say or write something because one believes it, but to find out whether one believes it" (xviii).

Phillips not only observes, but also endorses a certain idealization of poetry by his profession. In his "not [being] sufficiently [...] addicted to safety", in his readiness to engender the possibility of meeting another

self, the poet is "our last hope for happiness" (Phillips 8). The kind of poems which are full of subjective allusions, often touching on topics of loss, pain, or violence, are frequently regarded the most obscure. Yet, when language borders on silence as it does in such poems, it also borders on light and music (Steiner 72): the silence that is created when the meaningless tautologies of conventional speech are disregarded or put into a different context makes room for true encounters. It engenders an understanding of that other self, an emotional *enlightenment* which, in turn, can only happen if the words come close enough to music in their "being able to communicate before they are fully understood": "some of the most brilliant achievements of artistic form will incorporate some of the most revealing acts of self-formation" (Hufstader 19).

However, Phillips also criticises the way in which poetry has been depoliticized and dehistoricized by some of his peers in order to "align it with psychoanalysis" (5). What needs clarification here is the nature of the subjectivity often ascribed to lyric poetry. After "that which happened" to humanity and language during the Nazi regime, of course it is not the subjectivity inherent in the "metaphysical havens of interiority and timelessness"<sup>11</sup> that could prove Adorno's famous dictum about the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz wrong. As Leonard Olschner points out, what is really needed to this day is constructive introspection to make a poetry that is responsible towards history.

Yet one must ask again why Freud's psychoanalysis so often quotes lyric poetry whenever Freud's own theoretic approach is at a point where it apparently won't stretch far enough. According to Phillips, there are two reasons for this. Firstly, "the poet and poetry are used to sustain our belief in meaning", in the legitimacy of language. Possessing Keats' "Negative Capability" of "Not Knowing" – that is, the capability of "being in uncertainties [...] without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats qtd. in Phillips 23) – the analyst is being rewarded by a "great poem", or a good interpretation derived from the patient's free association raw material. This in turn will "enable the patient" to make a great and truly performative poem himself, using words that will not be "a substitute" for action, but "a prelude to it" (Phillips 25). Secondly, and on a slightly lesser scale, due to his or her apparent drawing the most profound insights without real effort, "the poet is a peculiarly difficult – and therefore peculiarly interesting – ego-ideal for the analyst" (Phillips 6).

As we have seen, Freud's psychoanalysis has in some instances



been guilty of "abusing" lyric poetry for its purposes, of manhandling it into too narrow and decontextualised a discourse. This could be due to a mistrust of fantasies left untreated and to a fear of the power of the raw, unaltered unconscious in the apparent control-addict Freud, which he attests to himself, after all. Psychoanalysis and poetry differ in language, method and expression, yet, they share the same goal: to reveal something which can go beyond the individual ego. Crucially, with a creative reader or patient, both the poet and the analyst might be able to share their responsibility to the language; that of "getting rid of the garbage, cutting through the clutter wherever [they] might find it, be it in the advertising slogan, the newspaper article, the politician's speech, the preacher's sermon" (Muldoon). In this, they, although being acutely aware of "having little or no place in the modern world" (Muldoon), are actually vital for this modern world which otherwise will, as George Steiner puts it, "end neither with a bang nor a whimper, but with a headline, a slogan, a pulp novel larger than the cedars of Lebanon" (73).

*Turning the Tables: "Unsympathisch und haarsträubend". When Rilke met Freud*

We have seen how in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" Freud, very much in character as the authoritative "scientist", matter-of-factly states: "der Glückliche phantasiert nie, nur der Unbefriedigte" (SA 10: 173). Having previously linked him, or her, who "phantasiert" to the poet, it could in fact be said that in Freud's view the activity of poetic writing potentially marks him, or her, who is unhappy. "Poets, after all, are not famous for their mental health", Phillips remarks (11), sarcastically stating his doubts as to whether psychoanalysis would have been a viable career option for Byron – as if sanity was a prerogative of his, Phillips', of all professions. After all, if, as Phillips states, psychoanalysis has so much in common with poetry, why shy away from the latter's shadows and bask only in its light? The degree of sensibility and the capacity for empathy demanded of the good analyst surely potentially gives way to mental instabilities not unlike those that the poet, vulnerable in his or her receptivity, is prone to.

It is however fair to say that such a form of unhappiness was one that the poet Rainer Maria Rilke was not unfamiliar with. After all, *Unbefriedigtsein* also implies that one has not made one's peace with the world, that one is restless. This apparent *conditio sine qua non* (at least as far as Freud was concerned) of the poetic profession both calls for the exami-

nation of the nature of the mutual influence of life and work, and represents the main point of contact between the poet and the father of psychoanalysis. Although Rilke decided against psychoanalysis for himself, he viewed it as having its strengths – as a theory. Also, he regarded his own art as therapeutic in itself – to a certain extent. Furthermore, like Freud, the poet also emphasised "die Notwendigkeit zur Aufarbeitung der Kindheit" (Schank 13); however, his working through took the shape of his poems, mainly those from the years 1898-1912.

Both the correspondence between Andreas-Salomé and Freud and that between her and Rilke are excellent sources for the documentation of the actual points of contact between the analyst and the poet, as they help us establish when they met in person. "Ich freute mich, Rainer Freud zu bringen, und sie gefielen sich [...]", Andreas-Salomé wrote in her Freud-diary (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 239). She is referring to introducing the two men to each other during the Second Psychoanalytic Congress in Munich, on the seventh and eighth of September 1913. Their firm places within her life in their respective uniqueness, and their equality in importance to her is emphasised by the fact that the dative and accusative objects in her sentence are ambivalent – that is, it is unclear who is being taken to whom. Their second and presumably last meeting took place in December 1915, when Rilke paid his only visit to the Freud family in Vienna. Unfortunately, no (published) letter by Rilke himself documenting that meeting exists;<sup>12</sup> however, according to a letter by Freud to Andreas-Salomé from July 1916, Rilke "hat uns in Wien deutlich genug zu erkennen gegeben, daß 'kein ewiger Bund mit ihm zu flechten' ist. So herzlich er bei einem ersten Besuch war, es ist nicht gelungen, ihn zu einem zweiten zu bewegen" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 56-57).

This seems to suggest that Freud was the keener of the two in regard to the maintenance of their acquaintance. While the father of psychoanalysis was deeply fascinated by lyric poets throughout his life, as we have seen, Rilke's decision against psychoanalysis had in fact been cemented as early as January 1912, brought about by the birth of the first of the *Duineser Elegien*. Although he had entertained the possibility of undergoing therapy with Viktor Gebattel in Munich for a short while, it was the fear for his "angels", for his art, which finalised Rilke's decision against analysis, as this letter to his "liebe Lou" shows:

Ich weiß jetzt, daß die Analyse für mich nur Sinn hätte, wenn der



merkwürdige Hintergedanke, nicht mehr zu schreiben, den ich mir während der Beendigung des *Malte* öfters als eine Art Erleichterung vor die Nase hängte, mir wirklich ernst wäre. Dann dürfte man sich die Teufel austreiben lassen, da sie ja im Bürgerlichen wirklich nur störend und peinlich sind, und gehen die Engel möglicherweise mit aus, so müßte man auch das als Vereinfachung auffassen und sich sagen, daß sie ja in jenem neuen nächsten Beruf (welchem?) sicher nicht in Verwendung kämen. (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 262-63)

"Philosophy will clip an angel's wings [...] Unweave a rainbow" – where Keats saw philosophy as a threat to art in "Lamia", Rilke saw psychoanalysis as damaging the "angels" of the imagination. Yet, although he lamented the fact that his poetry was far from rendering his life "leicht" or "einfach", Rilke regarded it as a form of self-treatment akin to psychoanalysis (see Rilke, *Briefe* 1: 381; Schank 14). Reminding Andreas-Salomé of the fact that Gebtsattel had been treating Clara, his wife, since the spring of 1911, he was quick to assure his concerned confidante that Clara's work never helped her, "während die meine in gewissem Sinn von Anfang an eine Art Selbstbehandlung war" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 261). This view, which was perhaps slightly self-deluding, was possibly adopted from Andreas-Salomé herself who, too, "resisted the idea of analysis for Rilke because she believed that his suffering and potential healing were both rooted in his access to preoedipal psychic material that might be damaged by analysis" (Martin 45).

However, Rilke's final decision against a talking cure was not reached easily – after all, he still kept undergoing a *Fernanalyse*, as it were, in his correspondence with Andreas-Salomé. His conflict between the need to protect his art from analysis and that to protect himself from his art is well documented in his letters to her from December 1911 and January 1912. They testify that he knew the limits of his art as a healing power and was still unsure whether he would not need help outside it, and therefore outside himself, after all: "in demselben Maße, als sie [his art] sich entwickelte und etwas Selbständiges wurde, verliert sie immer mehr das Therapeutische und Rücksichtsvolle und stellt Forderungen" (Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 261). Furthermore, although "der merkwürdige Hintergedanke, nicht mehr zu schreiben" was not weighty enough to influence Rilke's decision, he used it as an escapist daydream whenever his

art became "rücksichtslos" and when "mein Körperliches [...] Gefahr [läuft], die Karrikatur meiner Geistigkeit zu werden" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 261). Like Nietzsche, who longed for a little "Landgut", Rilke dreamt of becoming a doctor with a practice in the countryside (Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 263), yet his reality was his "terrible" art: "es ist das Furchtbare an der Kunst, daß sie, je weiter man in ihr kommt, desto mehr zum Äußersten, fast Unmöglichen verpflichtet" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 249).

Was he, the artist, literally driven "zum Äußersten", or outside his own self, by his art? In the case of Rilke and his rural fantasies, Freud's claim of the daydreamer *per definitionem* being dissatisfied with their situation within reality, and the (day-)dream being wish fulfillment, seems proven right. Despite this dissatisfaction – he was still undecided on the question of analytical help by January 18<sup>th</sup> and complained to Andreas-Salomé about his "auf und ab und hin und her" – Rilke at last came to the conclusion about psychoanalysis that "etwas wie eine desinfizierte Seele [...] dabei heraus[kommt], ein Unding, ein Lebendiges, roth korrigiert, wie die Seite in einem Schulheft" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 260). Ultimately, his own fertile messiness was preferable to the sterile "Aufgeräumtsein" of Freud's therapy.

Rilke never agreed to a third meeting: "After his final visit to the Freuds in December 1915, at a time when he was crushed by his military service in the War Archive in Vienna" (Molnar), Rilke wrote: "[...] öfters war ich daran, mir durch eine Aussprache mit Ihnen aus der Verschüttung zu helfen. Aber schliesslich überwog der Entschluss, die Sache allein durchzumachen, soweit einem eben noch ein trüber Satz Alleinseins bleibt. Wenn ich es nach und nach zu etwas Fassung bringe, so frag ich mich sicher bei Ihnen an und komme; ich weiss, das wird gut sein"<sup>13</sup>. "Nothing came of this hope", Molnar adds. But why, consideration for his art aside, was this glimpse of hope so purposefully trodden upon by the poet? In addition to the reasons suggested above, a fear for the perceived originality of his work might have been at play. One must only consider Freud's own and almost pathological refusal to go anywhere near the works of Nietzsche from 1876 onwards to be willing to give such deliberations one's credence.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, rather than envy of Freud's professional achievements, it could have been jealousy of a more personal nature which led the poet to all but terminate the contact with the psychoanalyst with whom he had been so "herzlich" and whose ideas were so similar to his. The woman



whom he needed from the moment they met to make him feel "real" and who had, since more than a decade, been withdrawing from him purposefully, now gave herself wholeheartedly to Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalysis, trying to be in Vienna whenever she could. Andreas-Salomé replied to Freud's disappointed letter thus: "Lieber Herr Professor, nein, deuten Sie Rainer sein Verhalten nicht falsch: es entsprang keiner Entfremdung, nur seiner Zerbrochenheit; ich weiß gut, wie er zu Ihnen steht" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 57). This is testament to her protectiveness of Freud's feelings as well as to her diplomatic skills, as Freud probably interpreted Rilke's behaviour correctly all along. For, although Rilke considered psychoanalysis or, as he called it, "die Sache selbst, die mit ihm [Freud] durchgeht", as having "ihre echten und starken Seiten"; his judgement of Freud's writings as known to him in the year 1912 was rather harsher: "Was ich von Freuds Schriften kenne, [ist mir] unsympathisch und stellenweise haarsträubend" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Rilke* 259-60).

For reasons about which we can all but speculate, the lines of communication between the two men, the analyst and the poet, were not truly open, and time and again it was Andreas-Salomé who had to "translate" them to each other. In 1922, the year in which Freud's formal address of her, "Verehrteste Frau", was finally replaced by the intimate "Liebste Lou" in his letters, there was a last point of – albeit indirect – contact during Rilke's lifetime. The poet sent a book to Andreas-Salomé "über den Schizophrenen Wölffli im Berner Irrenhaus" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 119), which she promptly forwarded to Freud. The latter replied: "Für die Schrift über den geisteskranken Künstler danke ich Ihnen oder Dr. Rilke sehr" (qtd. in Pfeiffer, *Briefwechsel Freud* 120).

After this, "there is a curious silence around Rilke" (Molnar) pervading the documents, letters and writings of Freud. This, along with the latter's frequent evasions of the discussion of lyric poetry, might be due to a self-confessed "ever more clearly discernible partisanship for the primacy of the intellect" in the father of psychoanalysis. In turn, this was, according to Freud himself, ultimately his "expression of a hostility towards the id".<sup>15</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jung, Lacan, Winnicott; to name but a few. An even longer list can be found in: Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises*. London: Faber, 2000: 4. All Phillips quotes are taken from this book. The essay "Poetry and Psychoanalysis" lists examples in abundance of analysts claiming their indebtedness to poetry.

<sup>2</sup> See Freud: "viele an sich eigentlich peinliche Erregungen können für den Hörer und Zuschauer des Dichters zur Quelle der Lust werden" (*SA* 10: 172).

<sup>3</sup> NB: I am not incorporating a discussion of *Die Traumdeutung* as I do not wish to explode the limited frame of this essay; but also because I follow Rachel Bowlby in distinguishing daydreams from dreams. In her essay "The other day. The interpretation of day-dreams" (in: *Sigmund Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams": New Interdisciplinary Essays*. Ed. Laura Marcus. Manchester: UP, 1999: 160-182), she argues that daydreams, as opposed to dreams, involve consciousness of the fact of the daydream not being reality; the possibility of control over their events; and a different temporal direction of wishes (170-1).

<sup>4</sup> The other important half is, of course, the Dionysian frenzy, twin of such Apollinian dream and individuation.

<sup>5</sup> See particularly *Drei Abhandlungen über die Sexualität*, where Freud speaks of the "sogenannten normalen Sexualtrieb" (*SA* 5: 74); and "Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens *Gradiva*": "Die Grenze aber zwischen den normal und krankhaft benannten Seelenzuständen ist zum Teil eine konventionelle, zum anderen eine so fließende, daß wahrscheinlich jeder von uns sie im Laufe eines Tages mehrmals überschreitet" (*SA* 10: 43).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Molnar, "The Bizarre Chair: A Slant on Freud's Light Reading in the 1930s". Given to me by the author in the Freud-museum in Maresfield Gardens in London. The essay is also included in the collection *Reading Freud's Reading*, ed. Sander Gilman (New York: UP, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> See next Freud quote.

<sup>8</sup> This was first referred to in a letter to Andreas-Salomé from July 30th, 1915 (qtd. in Pfeiffer 35-36).

<sup>9</sup> Andreas-Salomé might be responding to Freud's mole-metaphor with this bird-allusion in a letter to him, 18th July, 1916, (qtd. in Pfeiffer 56).

<sup>10</sup> Freud's choice to separate and prioritise (literary "content" over style) as represented in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" is referred to here.

<sup>11</sup> From a conversation with Leonard Olschner.

<sup>12</sup> At this point in the *Briefwechsel* with Lou Andreas-Salomé, there is a gap of a year and a half: between June 9th 1915 and January 6th 1917, Rilke apparently either did not write to Andreas-Salomé, or those letters have been lost or destroyed. According to Ernst Pfeiffer, the latter option is rather more likely,



as from the time of their platonic friendship, which lasted from June 1903 to the poet's death in December 1926, a tenth of Rilke's and a staggering third of Salomé's letters have been lost. Pfeiffer further reports that at least those missing from "der ersten, leidenschaftlichen Phase der Beziehung" – May 1897 until February 1901 – were definitely destroyed by both lovers in a conscious and concerted effort.

<sup>13</sup> Rilke to Freud. February 17th, 1916. Copy held in Freud Museum, Maresfield Gardens, London.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche's influence on Freud and Freud's denial of it is well documented by Reinhard Gasser's *Nietzsche und Freud*, and by Ronald Lehrer's *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's Life and Thought: On the Origins of a Psychology of Dynamic Unconscious Mental Functioning*. See also: Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*.

<sup>15</sup> From a 1928 letter to Istvan Hollós, in: Michael Molnar (ed.), *The Diary of Sigmund Freud 1929-1939*, (New York: Scribner's, 1992), 278. The full quotation is: "I finally admitted to myself that [...] I did not like these sick people, that I was angry with them at finding them so far from myself and everything human. A curious type of intolerance which of course makes me unfit to be a psychiatrist. In the course of time I have ceased to find myself interesting, which is of course analytically incorrect. [...] ... is it the result of an ever more clearly discernible partisanship for the primacy of the intellect, the expression of a hostility towards the id?"

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