

## **The Site for Contemporary Psychoanalysis Thursday group Autumn 2022**

**Barry Watt**

**October 6 13 20 27, November 3**

**Re-Considering Freud's 'History of an Infantile Neurosis'.**

In this series of seminars, we are going to take the opportunity to read and consider together Freud's seminal 1914 case study 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', which concerns Freud's work with Sergei Pankejeff, the so-called 'Wolf Man'.

We will begin the first half of our series of discussions by reviewing Freud's text and contextualising Freud's narrative within the trajectory of his theory building – in particular, the development of his theory of narcissism and his elaboration of anal and oral sexualities – and the evolution of his clinical practice, especially as this was spurred by his rivalry with the increasingly dissenting opinions of Adler and Jung, whose views on theory and treatment Freud hoped the case study would definitively counter. Alongside this intellectual contextualisation, we will also take the chance to consider some recently published research into Freud's clinical logbook, that gives us the fullest access so far to Freud's own record of his working practices and clinical routine. This comparison allows us to raise the ever present and vexatious question of the relationship between theory and practice and how the two do – or do not – intersect and inform

one another. With this question in mind, we will turn to consider the later accounts of Pankejeff's involvement with psychoanalysis, his own memoir of his treatment with Freud and Ruth Mack Brunswick's case study of her later work with Pankejeff. Given the vast divergence between Pankejeff's version of his own life and Freud's and Mack Brunswick's versions, we will want to ask why this divergence is so marked and wonder about its implications.

The final two seminars will be devoted to introducing the work of two hugely neglected and long overlooked Hungarian-French psychoanalysts, Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham, whose lifelong collaborative engagement with Freud's case study became the foundation of their own unique theoretical and clinical innovations, that are especially important for reframing urgent contemporary questions concerning psychosis, so-called 'borderline' conditions and the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

A full reading list will be sent closer to the time and PDFs will be provided of hard to find or out-of-print material. Core texts will include:

- Abraham N. & Torok M. (1971) 'The Topography of Reality: Sketching a Metapsychology of the Secret'.
  - Abraham, N. & Torok, M. (1972) 'Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection vs Incorporation'.
- Abraham, N. and Torok, M. (1975), "'The Lost Object - Me": Notes on Endocryptic Identification'.

- in (1994) *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, University of Chicago Press.
- Freud, S. (1918) *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, SE 17.
- Mack Brunswick, R. (1928) 'A Supplement to Freud's "History of an Infantile Neurosis"', IJP (available on PEP Web).
- Mahalel, A.T. (2020) 'The Wolf Man and Sigmund Freud by Sergei Pankejeff: between a case study and a memoir', in *Reading Freud's Patients: Memoir, Narrative and Analysand*, Routledge.
- May, U. (2018) *Freud at Work: On the History of Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice with an Analysis of Freud's Patient Record Book*, Routledge.

**November 10 17 24**

**In Freud's Case: 'Was will das Weib'?**

**Liz Guild**

*'Psychoanalytic writing is a failure – as is all writing, from a psychoanalytic point of view – in the sense that it is always saying something other than it intends to'*

Adam Phillips, Introduction to John Forrester, *Thinking in Cases* (Polity, 2017)

For some commentators on Freud's last case study 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' ('Über die Psychogenese eine Falles von weiblicher Homosexualität' (1920)) his 'behaviour' was 'appalling': homophobic, misogynist, heterosexist ... the list goes on. Case closed. Or is it? These three seminars explore ways of reading this case – as much the how and why of our readings as the different theoretical approaches we bring to bear. How to read the case psychoanalytically, and how to think about the contradictions, blindspots and tensions we find in it – 'Freud's conceptions aren't quite in agreement amongst themselves' (Lacan, 1955) – and which some theoretical approaches may shut down whilst attempting to resolve? What can a case study written a century ago help us think about here and now, as 1. we (still) struggle to think as openly as possible about the question, 'was will das Weib?' what do women want? (the ambiguity introduced by the English translation will be useful to us as we go further), and about subjectivity, sexuality and

desire, and 2. we think about how we want to present our own work?

## **1. Fail again, fail better : an impossible experiment in reading**

This seminar asks you just to read, or reread, the case, with as open a mind as possible. If we try to bring a form of 'evenly suspended attention' to Freud's words, what emerges? Forget what you know of the case, forget the commentators and critiques (we'll come to them another day); but then, what can't you forget?

A wholly neutral, value-free reading is of course impossible, as it is for us to read without traces of our own memory and desire. But if we focus on how we are reading, what we bring to the process, what does this reveal to us about our reading habits quite as much as what about Freud's ideas and practice in this (one) case?

And what of our own practice, our multidimensional *listening* habits? And of our representation of our clinical practice? Can this exercise in just reading help us review what we think matters and how we like to present our work?

## **2. Rethinking Oedipus: if not Oedipus, then what?**

In the course of the case study Freud works with concepts of bisexuality and the Oedipus complex, which, in the light of what he learns of the girl's early relationship with her mother, he has to revise

in terms of Oedipal asymmetry – with all its implications for any woman's sexuality. We need to revisit both the earlier 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905) and the later 'Female Sexuality' (1931) to explore this further. If 'The Psychogenesis ...' fails to help us understand the origins of homosexuality, and female homosexuality (Freud's term) here requires Freud to rethink Oedipus, a question that follows is, can we think about how human beings become sexed/sexual without some such structural principle? How do you prefer to understand such questions of subjectivity, identification and desire? Ann D'Ercole's reading of the case, 'Designing the Lesbian Subject: Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards' (1999) will help us think about a – not unproblematic— alternative. Or, to put the question more pointedly, how can we release 'female homosexuality' from its association with masculinity? And how does our clinical practice help us think about these questions?

### **3. From 'Homosexuality' to 'motherhood' ...**

Freud's ideas apparently travel from the first word in the case study, 'Homosexuality' to the last, 'motherhood': or do we need to read his account backwards, to help reveal something of the models of the feminine and of gender with which he works and struggles. To help us trace this, it's time to turn elsewhere, as well as to turn again to the case study: again to his 'Three Essays on the Theory of

Sexuality' (1905), and also to his first case study, Dora's case. The seminar begins with a focus on the meaning of the dreams in both cases and on two scenes: Dora's silent gazing on the Sistine Madonna in the Dresden Gallery and Freud's analogy of his 'homosexual' patient's lack of interest in his theorising as being like a '*grande dame*'s indifference to objects in a museum she has been taken to visit; 'how very interesting'. These focuses help us explore how 'Homosexuality', 'motherhood' and the 'feminine' are framed; as will some pages from Deborah Levy, *Real Estate*, on dreams, desires and missing or rewritten desires.

## **Reading List**

There may be additions or alterations nearer the time of the seminars (though with plenty of notice), and some reading may be added in the light of what emerges in seminar discussion.

### **Seminar 1**

Freud, 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (1920), S.E. vol. 18, pp. 147-172; available on PEP

<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.018.0145a&type=hitlist&num=0&query=zone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%2Cparagraphs%7Cauthor%2Cfreud%7Ctitle%2Cthe+psychogenesis+of+a+case+of+homosexuality+in+a+woman%7Cviewperiod%2Cweek%7Csort%2Ccitecount%2Cnd#hit1>

## Seminar 2

Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905), S.E. vol. 7, 123-246; available on PEP

<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.007.0123a&type=hitlist&num=0&query=zone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%2Cparagraphs%7Cauthor%2Cfreud%7Ctitle%2Cthree+essays+on+the+theory+of+sexuality%7Cviewperiod%2Cweek%7Csort%2Ccitecount%2Cnd#hit1>

Freud, 'Female Sexuality' (1931), S.E. vol. 21, pp.221-244; available on PEP

<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.021.0221a&type=hitlist&num=0&query=zone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%2Cparagraphs%7Cauthor%2Cfreud%7Ctitle%2Cfemale+sexuality%7Cviewperiod%2Cweek%7Csort%2Cauthor%2Ca#hit1>

d'Ercole, Ann, 'Designing the Lesbian Subject: Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards', in R.C. Lesser and E. Schoenberg (eds), *That Obscure Object of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisited* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 115-129 (scan available)

Worthington, Anne (2011) Female homosexuality: psychoanalysis and queer theory. PhD thesis, Middlesex University [Thesis], especially chapter 1

[https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/7222/1/Worthington\\_PhD.pdf](https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/7222/1/Worthington_PhD.pdf)



### **Seminar 3**

Freud, 'Three Essays ...'

Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', S. E. vol. 7, pp. 7-111

<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.007.0001a>

Levy, D., *Real Estate*, chapter 2

For those of you wanting to read further:

Butler, J., *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990)

De Lauretis, T., 'Letter to an Unknown Woman', in R.C. Lesser and E. Schoenberg (eds), *That Obscure Object of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisited* (Routledge, 1999), pp.37-53

Forrester, J., *Thinking in Cases* (Polity, 2017)

Harris, A., 'Gender as Contradiction', in R.C. Lesser and E. Schoenberg (eds), *That Obscure Object of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisited* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 156-179

O'Connor N. and Ryan, J., *Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities: Lesbianism and Psychoanalysis* (Virago, 1993)

Stoller, R., *Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity* (Quadrangle/NewYork Times Book Co, 1973)

Stoller, R., 'Patients responses to their own case reports', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 36 (1988), 371-391

### **Dec 1 8**

**Eric Harper** Developing a Practice (Details to follow)

