



HISTORY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS
Series editor: Peter L. Rudnytsky

ROUTLEDGE

Freud's British Family

Reclaiming Lost Lives in Manchester and London

Roger Willoughby



‘This book is the best and most detailed thing ever written about the Freud brothers who emigrated to England, their businesses and families, and their important relationship with Sigmund Freud. Roger Willoughby has devoted more than a decade to researching the British branch of the Freud family. And he has uncovered things that Freud biographers have laboured in vain to research for decades. Highly recommended!’

Christfried Tögel, editor of the *Sigmund Freud Gesamtausgabe*, the first complete Freud edition in 23 volumes, and author of *Sigmund Freud 1856–1939: A Biographical Compendium*

‘A fascinating, evocative, and enlightening portrayal and study of many aspects of Freud’s history not clearly laid out before. The phrase in the title ‘lost lives’ touches both loss and gains in the vicissitudes of Freud’s history and makeup. That he would die in England on Yom Kippur a year after seeking safety in England keeps the mystery of his life open and in this book lives and character of the Freud family sparkle in depth and richness’.

Michael Eigen, psychoanalyst, author of *The Psychotic Core*, *The Mystical Psychoanalyst*, *Feeling Matters*, and *Bits of Psyche*

‘Willoughby has dug deep and brought us lost shadows behind Freud – and now, not so lost. No individual exists outside his context. This extensively researched history places Freud within forgotten elements of his family. His family was the setting from which the Oedipal world of early psychoanalysis sprang and which has demanded the willing and unwilling review of human nature in the twentieth century. In other words, no man is an island outside the spreading ocean of his original family. There could be no more relevant context in which to place Freud. And this book contributes a well-researched aim into the heart of psychoanalysis itself’.

R D Hinshelwood, Emeritus Professor of Psychoanalysis, University of Essex, Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society, founder of *Psychoanalysis & History*, and author of *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* amongst other books

‘In this very interesting book, Roger Willoughby uses newly available archives to relate the history of Freud’s “English” family in depth. Settling in Manchester, Emmanuel and Philipp Freud became importers of fancy goods – haberdashery, perfumes, trinkets, fabrics – and integrated perfectly, each in their own way, into the English Jewish bourgeoisie. Freud visited them twice, in 1875 and 1908. Willoughby hypothesizes that Freud’s links with Britain materialized through his relationship with his brothers, giving rise to his Anglophilia and to his admiration for the constitutional monarchy. This attachment would partly explain why Freud chose, in 1938, to go into exile in London, city of the superego, symbol of a liberal regime conducive to the development of psychoanalysis. From a historiographical

point of view, the author relies on modern principles of a study of ‘minor lives’ or anonymous existences, generally repressed by official history. Here is a work which testifies to the richness of studies devoted to Freud over the past twenty years’.

Élisabeth Roudinesco, Head of Research in History at the
Université de Paris VII-Diderot, psychoanalyst, and author of
Jacques Lacan & Co and *Freud: In His Time and Ours*

‘This outstanding study of the “English” Freuds is long overdue. It provides detailed insight from *inside* Freud’s family about the master’s personal life as well as background to his own dreams. We encounter the great psychoanalyst in the heart of both his Austrian and English families. There is, as added bonus, a rich account of the distinguished visitors and patients seen during his last days in London’.

Ross M Skelton, Professor of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis (Emeritus),
Trinity College Dublin and Editor-in-Chief of *The Edinburgh International
Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis*

‘Biography often creates protagonist-giants trampling their contemporaries. John Freud, Sigmund’s infant playmate, vanished so mysteriously from the historical record that certain fantasists could even argue Freud had killed him. In a sense Freudian historiography has done just that. By dint of intense and wide-ranging research, Roger Willoughby has finally managed to sketch John’s actual story – and thus restore him to life. On a wider scale Willoughby’s book maps out the web of relationships between Freud and his Manchester relatives – his half-brothers, Emanuel and Philipp and their families. Willoughby has not only traced as much of their history as can be recuperated from the archival records, he also unearths their previously ignored influence on Freud’s character and work throughout his life. What makes this research remarkable is its passion to reclaim for history neglected figures who have hitherto been treated as mute bystanders. Willoughby asserts their value and agency. The Freuds of Bloom Street, Manchester, bear comparison with Joyce’s Leopold Bloom: in Willoughby’s telling they are all accorded the respect due to the common man, the real ‘hero’ of our anti-heroic culture’.

Michael Molnar, ex-Director of the Freud Museum, London, author of *Looking
Through Freud’s Photos* and editor of *The Diary of Sigmund Freud 1929–1939*

‘Roger Willoughby has written a fascinating and absorbing narrative of Freud’s ‘British family’, and its enduring presence in his life and work. *Freud’s British Family* holds the promise of deepening our appreciation of how Freud’s psychoanalytic thought reflected his lived experiences with the Freud “families” he came to know in Manchester, Vienna, and Freiberg. In focusing on Freud’s British family, the author has made a genuinely new contribution to Freud biography and the historiography of psychoanalysis’.

Nellie L. Thompson, New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute,
editor of *100 Years of the IPA: The Centenary History* and
Play, Gender, Therapy: Selected Papers of Eleanor Galenson

Freud's British Family

Freud's British Family presents ground-breaking research into the lives of the British branch of the Freud family, their connections to the founder of psychoanalysis, and into Freud's relationship to Britain.

Documenting the complex relationships the elder Freud brothers had with their much younger brother Sigmund, *Freud's British Family* reveals the significant influence these hitherto largely forgotten Freuds had on the mental economy of the founder of psychoanalysis. Roger Willoughby shows how these key family relationships helped shape Freud's thinking, attitudes, and theorising, including emerging ideas on rivalry, the Oedipus complex, character, and art. In addition to considering their correspondence and meetings with Freud in continental Europe, the book carefully documents Freud's own visits to his brothers and to Britain in 1875 and again in 1908. *Freud's British Family* concludes with a discussion of Freud's final 15 months in London after he left Nazi Vienna as a refugee. *Freud's British Family* offers a rich, contextualised understanding of the sibling, familial, and socio-cultural ties that went into forming the tapestry of psychoanalysis.

Freud's British Family will be of great interest to psychoanalysts and psychotherapists in practice and in training, and to scholars of the history of psychoanalysis, twentieth century history, psychosocial studies, and Jewish studies.

Roger Willoughby is a clinical psychologist, historian, academic, and writer. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and holds doctorates in psychoanalytic studies from the University of Kent and University of Oxford. He is a founder and co-editor of historiesofpsychoanalysis.com.

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Freud's British Family

Reclaiming Lost Lives in Manchester
and London

Roger Willoughby

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But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity . . . Who knows whether the best of men be known? Or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, then any that stand remembred in the known account of time, with the favour of the everlasting Register? The first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only Chronicle.

– Sir Thomas Browne, *Hybriotaphia, Urn Burial*

The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

– Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

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Papers and allied collections, and to the staff at the Freud Museum, London, for their generous help with archival material.

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Finally, I wish to thank my children for their forbearance, love, and support during the too many years when I have been at times distracted from them by Freud and his family.

Abbreviations

BPAS	British Psycho-Analytical Society
<i>Die Brautbriefe</i>	Gerhard Fichtner, Ilse Grubrich-Simitis & Albrecht Hirschmüller (eds) <i>Die Brautbriefe, 1882–1886</i> . 5 volumes. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2011–2021.
<i>Freud-Abraham</i>	E Falzeder (ed) <i>The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham</i> , London: Karnac, 2002.
<i>Freud-Binswanger</i>	Gerhard Fichtner (ed) <i>The Sigmund Freud-Ludwig Binswanger Correspondence 1908–1938</i> , New York: Other Press, 2003.
<i>Freud-Eitingon</i>	M Schröter (ed) <i>Sigmund Freud-Max Eitingon, Briefwechsel 1906–1939</i> , Tübingen: edition diskord, 2004.
<i>Freud-Ferenczi</i>	E Falzeder, E Brabant & P Giampiere-Deutsch (eds) <i>The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi</i> , 3 volumes, Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1992–2000.
<i>Freud-Fliess</i>	J M Masson (ed) <i>The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904</i> , Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1985.
<i>Freud-Freud</i>	Ingeborg Meyer-Palmedo (ed) <i>Correspondence 1904–1938 Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud</i> , Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.
<i>Freud-Jones</i>	R Andrew Paskauskas (ed) <i>The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones 1908–1939</i> , Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1995.
<i>Freud-Jung</i>	William McGuire (ed) <i>The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and CG Jung</i> , Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974.
<i>Freud-Lampl-de Groot</i>	Gertie Bögels (ed) <i>The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Jeanne Lampl-de Groot, 1921–1939</i> , London: Routledge, 2023.

<i>Freud Letters</i>	Ernst L Freud (ed) <i>Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873–1939</i> , London: Hogarth, 1961.
<i>Freud-Pfister</i>	Heinrich Meng & Ernst L Freud (eds) <i>Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud & Oskar Pfister</i> , New York: Basic Books, 1963.
<i>Freud-Rank</i>	E James Lieberman & Gregory C Richter (eds) <i>The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis</i> , Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.
<i>Freud-Silberstein</i>	W Boehlich (ed) <i>The Letters of Sigmund Freud to Eduard Silberstein 1871–1881</i> , Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1990.
<i>IJPA</i>	<i>International Journal of Psycho-Analysis</i>
<i>IRPA</i>	<i>International Review of Psycho-Analysis</i>
<i>Life & Work</i>	E Jones <i>Sigmund Freud: Life and Work</i> , 3 volumes, London: Hogarth, 1953–1957.
<i>P&H</i>	<i>Psychoanalysis and History</i>
<i>Reisebriefe</i>	S Freud <i>Unser Herz zeigt nach dem Süden: Reisebriefe 1895–1923</i> [Our Heart Points to the South: Travel Letters 1895–1923], edited by Christfried Tögel in collaboration with Michael Molnar, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2002
<i>Rundbriefe</i>	Gerhard Wittenberger & Christfried Tögel (eds) <i>Die Rundbriefe des ‘Geheimen Komitees’</i> [The Circular Letters of the Secret Committee], 4 volumes. Tübingen: Diskord, 1999–2006.
<i>SE</i>	J Strachey (ed) <i>The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud</i> , 24 volumes. London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974.
UOR SC	University of Reading Special Collections

Introduction

What does it feel like to be marginalised, ignored, indeed forgotten? It is only now that the stories of many are being told for the first time. The lives of the majority have been conspicuous by their absence from traditional historical narratives. Omissions include such groups as women, people of colour, and the working classes. A century ago, Virginia Woolf notably highlighted the oblivion of the former, depicting women as ‘all but absent from history’.¹ Similarly, although in a very different style, Frantz Fanon contrasted the unrecorded lives of people of colour, denuded of meaning in the colonial situation, with those of the settler, who ideologically became inscribed as the makers (and authors) of history.² And the broader point is made by Christopher Hill, amongst others, who commented that ‘most of our history is written about, and from the point of view of, a tiny fragment of the population’.³ It is with such omissions, such silences, such repressions, that the present work is concerned, at least as they are manifest within the early history of Freud and his hitherto unknown British family. With this concern, the aim here is to work towards a repopulation of the early British Freudian habitat and to thus enable a revised reading of that history.

It is rather ironic that such work is needed. Psychoanalysis as a practice is profoundly interested in silenced histories: the lives and stories of those people who have participated in the evolving process have fundamentally shaped its theories, techniques, and texts. Paradoxically however, psychoanalysts themselves, at least according to the eminent historian of psychoanalysis Alain de Mijolla, have tended to be less than interested in the history of their own discipline, a phenomenon which he suggested may be to do with a wish for priority.⁴ Arguably, this was sponsored by the received histories of psychoanalysis, in texts such as Freud’s own 1914 monograph *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* and Ernest Jones’s three-volume authorised *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, which offered largely decontextualised and highly politicised accounts of the development of Freudian psychoanalysis.

One clear result of the so-called Freud wars⁵ was that Freud’s theories and praxis began to have recognisable antecedents: psychoanalysis did not spring from Freud’s mind *ex nihilo*. Lancelot Whyte’s *The Unconscious Before Freud*, for example, highlighted these within the European philosophical traditions between

roughly 1680 and 1880.⁶ More substantively, Henri Ellenberger's landmark book *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, in contrast to much of the earlier received history of psychoanalysis, situated the emergence of dynamic psychiatry in a long arc of Western cultural processes, within which the Freudian unconscious exists not so much at a point of fundamental epistemological rupture but rather as part of a continuum.⁷ The volume is, as Mark Micale says, a massive contextualisation of Freud's work,⁸ albeit one that privileges a Continental perspective. More locally, Carl Schorske's influential work situated the origins of psychoanalysis in a particular historical and cultural context, *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.⁹ These are important and ground-breaking works.

However, Freud had another much more personal set of sources for his ideas: his own lived experience, his family life, his remembered-reconstructed early childhood and later relationships, his own subjectivity with its interiority of fantasies and dreams, and his family roots in Central European Judaism. Freud's reflections on his own biography, what is often referred to as his self-analysis which began in earnest following his father's death in 1896, substantially shaped his nascent psychoanalytic ideas. It is with part of this cast of characters, specifically Freud's British family – his older half-brothers Emanuel and Philipp and their close kin – that the present book is substantially concerned, into which Freud's three periods in Britain in 1875, in 1908, and finally in 1938–39 are then woven. The resultant story is thus a dual history, in which there is a shifting text and context between the Manchester Freuds and Freud and his family in Vienna, with each at times occupying one or other alternate position. In a more abstract psychoanalytic sense, with their history and emotional connectedness, they form a species of oscillating container-contained relationship,¹⁰ with each for example supporting, nurturing, influencing, cheering-on, stabilising, and changing the other.

The affection and complexities of feeling Freud maintained for his half-brothers and their families in Britain is here revealed for the first time in detail. These relationships influenced his imagination,¹¹ and his thinking and theorising on mental structure and psychodynamics. They would also – in many cases – act as templates for his own interpersonal relationships. Some of Freud's thinking about his British family is emblematic of a family romance.¹²

Elsewhere, Leonore Davidoff brilliantly explores the importance of sibling relationships in Freud's life, concentrating especially on his sisters in Vienna.¹³ However, she largely ignores the previously obscure stories of Freud's British family, an omission which is unfortunate as Freud's early relationships with them were particularly formative. His subsequent reflections on these core relationships became indispensable building blocks during his self-analysis and theorising. Some of these stories, in turn, were used illustratively in Freud's published correspondence and several individuals – notably his nephew John Freud – appear as key characters in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and other works. Through such inscription, Freud's early life has itself become the founding case history of psychoanalysis as a discipline.¹⁴ Its leading actors – notably Freud's British family – continue to exert an active influence on subsequent psychoanalytic generations,¹⁵ with even

his more general readers being typically introduced to psychoanalysis through the medium of Freud's biography. And in the present context, Freud's hitherto obscure British family and his own life and times in Britain, has served as an unappreciated access point for a British and wider English-speaking audience to his thinking. One related derivative aspect of this, which is far better known, is Freud's engagement with English literature – a love built on his attachment to his English-speaking British family.¹⁶

Shifting away from a concentration on the well-trodden 'originary decade [1895–1905] of Freud's science', as Young-Bruehl terms it,¹⁷ the present volume offers a more systemic, relational, and contextual perspective on Freud through its displaced focus onto his older half-brothers, Emanuel and Philipp, and their families, who migrated to Britain in 1859, and lived and worked predominantly in Manchester. This was Freud's forgotten British family, people whose very names have been marginalised and frankly excluded from received narratives about the origins of psychoanalysis.

The depiction of the British branch of the Freud family in the psychoanalytic and historical literature has previously been cursory and often misleading. Ronald Clark describes Freud's half-brothers Emanuel and Philipp as running 'prosperous businesses'.¹⁸ By contrast, Ernest Jones (1879–1958) depicted Emanuel as having achieved 'some success',¹⁹ though he later suggested he was 'never well off',²⁰ and that Philipp was an 'insignificant little man' who 'is said to have ended up as a pedlar'.²¹ Leslie Adams suggested Emanuel Freud's Manchester-based business 'prospered',²² though his brother Philipp eked out a living as pedlar (as did their father), and the Freud family's lack of cooperation with his research suggested there was 'some desperately disillusioning truth',²³ probably poverty. Such references to the British Freuds' wealth, or lack of it, may be a shorthand characterisation, unsurprising given the dearth of publicly available archival material touching on Freud's British family and the tantalising sense that this absence marks a repression of the history of this branch of the family. Ernst Freud even pointed to this when he noted that: 'Complete collections of letters, such as those to my father's half brother, Emanuel, and his nephew John, *have obstinately refused to come to light*'.²⁴

The following chapters give voice to Freud's British family and address the lack of knowledge about them. They deserve to be heard, not only because they have been poorly served until now, but also because of their inherently interesting lives and the light they obliquely shine on Sigmund Freud. Their lives are discussed here comprehensively for the first time using original and often new source material. In the process, Freud too comes across in ways that are different, which is perhaps unsurprising as consideration of one side of a family inevitably highlights unseen or underappreciated aspects of the other. Freud's own time in Britain is revealed with much new detail.

Freud's British family and the differing qualities they represented, helped shape his thinking and their presence is woven through Freud's key texts in an understated way. These relationships subtly illuminated for Freud the importance of key phenomena, such as sibling and familial relationships, play, forms of belief,

psychopathology, power and authority, and Oedipal dynamics. They also undoubtedly bolstered Freud's wider Anglophile attitude and values. England, for him, became a locale of imagined intellectual freedom, and fed his ambition to have his ideas disseminated in English and to see psychoanalysis established in Britain, his older brothers' home and what would become his final home as a refugee from Nazi persecution. But for now, let's go back to the beginning of the story.

Notes

- 1 V Woolf *A Room of One's Own*, edited by M Schiach, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 56.
- 2 F Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth*, London: Penguin, 2001, pp. 39–40.
- 3 Christopher Hill *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*, London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972, p. 16.
- 4 Alain de Mijolla & Annick Ohayon 'De l'histoire personnelle à l'historique de la psychanalyse: une trajectoire', *Nouvelle Revue de Psychosociologie*, 2015, 2, p. 255; see also Mark S Micale 'Henry F Ellenberger and the origins of European psychiatric historiography', in *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F Ellenberger in the History of Psychiatry*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 48.
- 5 John Forrester *Despatches from the Freud Wars: Psychoanalysis and Its Passions*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997; Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen & Sonu Shamdasani *The Freud Files: An Inquiry into the History of Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- 6 Lancelot L Whyte *The Unconscious before Freud*, New York: Basic Books, 1960.
- 7 Henri F Ellenberger *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*, New York: Basic Books, 1970; Alain de Mijolla & Annick Ohayon 'De l'histoire personnelle à l'historique de la psychanalyse: une trajectoire', *Nouvelle Revue de Psychosociologie*, 2015, 2, p. 255.
- 8 Mark S Micale 'Henry F Ellenberger and the origins of European psychiatric historiography', in *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F Ellenberger in the History of Psychiatry*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 59.
- 9 For a useful discussion of this see Carl E Schorske *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, especially pp. 181–207.
- 10 Wilfred R Bion *Attention and Interpretation: A Scientific Approach to Insight in Psycho-Analysis and Groups*, London: Tavistock, 1970.
- 11 *Life & Work*, 1, pp. 15 and 26; Jacques Szaluta 'Freud's ego ideals: A study of admired modern historical and political personages', *JAPA*, 1983, 31, pp. 161–162.
- 12 S Freud 'Family romances', *SE*, 1909, 9, pp. 235–242.
- 13 Leonore Davidoff *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations 1780–1920*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- 14 It is worth emphasising that psychoanalysis as it is understood here incorporates three distinct, though interrelated, entities: it is a theory of the mind, a research activity, and a therapeutic practice. Psychoanalysis is thus not coextensive with a method of treating patients; that is merely one application of the overarching theory, albeit an important one. For a useful discussion on this, see David Bell *Psychoanalysis and Culture: A Kleinian Perspective*, London: Duckworth, 1999, pp. 1–7.
- 15 Elisabeth Young-Bruehl 'A history of Freud biographies', in Mark S Micale & Roy Porter (eds) *Discovering the History of Psychiatry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 158.
- 16 For a discussion of Freud's engagement with English texts, see S S Pawer *A Cultural Citizen of the World: Sigmund Freud's Knowledge and Use of British and American Writings*, London: Legenda, 2009.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

- 18 R W Clark *Freud: The Man and the Cause*, London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1980, p. 14.
- 19 *Life & Work*, 1, p. 15.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 21 *Life & Work*, 2, p. 483.
- 22 Leslie Adams to the British Library, 21 July 1951, Manchester Central Library archives.
- 23 Leslie Adams to Sidney Horrocks, 10 February 1952, Manchester Central Library archives.
- 24 Ernst L Freud 'Preface', in *Freud Letters*, p. vii; emphasis added.



The Freud family

Sites of belonging, imagination, and diaspora

Introduction

Family relationships form the matrix from which identity, imagination, and cultural life emerge, the dung heap of stories from which psychoanalysis grew.¹ For his raw material, Freud drew on the narratives of his patients – mainly women – and from the dreams and stories that made up his own remembered life history, as rediscovered and reorganised in his self-analysis. Such accounts must inevitably carry caveats, given the plastic and constructional nature of memory, and Freud's own recollections from the 1890s of events 40 years previously are no exception to this. That said, the present chapter offers a close consideration of Freud's early family history, outlining the family's complex structure, and their various sites of cultural and domestic belonging. The family's life in Freiberg was but one instance of this, after which their dispersal in 1859 would take Freud and a reduced nuclear family ultimately to Vienna and his older half-brothers and their entourage to Britain.

Freud and his family: composition, relationships, and revenants

Born in the family home, a rented upstairs room at 117 Schlossergasse,² in Freiberg (Příbor) on 6 May 1856, Sigismund Schlomo Freud was the first child of a middle-aged father, Jacob Freud (1815–1896), and his considerably younger second (or *possibly* third) wife, Amalia (née Nathansohn: 1835–1930).³ Freud already had two considerably older surviving half-brothers, Emanuel (1832–1914) and Philipp (1834–1911), from his father's first marriage to Sally (née Kanner: c.1815–1852), both of whom were old enough to be his father. As many have pointed out, including Freud himself, Emanuel functioned as an alternative benign, dynamic, and effective father figure in Freud's mental economy. He would also become, as will be emphasised here, an assimilated member of Anglo-Jewry and overtly secular for at least the second half of his life. More obscure in the historical records, Philipp served a shadow function to that of his older brother, being rather more traditional and seemingly forbidding, yet with a liking for jokes at the same time. In contrast to Emanuel, Philipp would retain his religious belonging,

something Freud as a self-declared ‘godless Jew’ eschewed,⁴ yet to which he would nonetheless devote much study, the evolving fruits of which would appear firstly in 1913 in *Totem and Taboo*, followed by *The Future of an Illusion* in 1927, and *Civilization and Its Discontents* in 1930, before reaching their apogee in his final 1939 book *Moses and Monotheism*.

Jacob Freud was born in Tysmenitz, in Galicia, on the eastern fringe of the Austrian Empire (now Tysmenytsia, in western Ukraine), and initially worked in partnership with his maternal grandfather Siskind Hofmann (c.1768–aft.1848), primarily as a travelling wool and linen merchant, though he also traded in tallow, honey, furs, and other goods.⁵ By the late 1840s or early 1850s (during which period Siskind probably died), Jacob must have established himself as a sole trader, being latterly assisted by Emanuel and then Philipp. Coming from an orthodox Hasidic Jewish tradition, Jacob apparently renounced this path in his early twenties,⁶ his much later marriage to Amalia on 29 July 1855 being conducted by a Rabbi of the Reform movement.⁷

From the 1850s through to the 1880s at least, Jacob and his immediate family were solidly working class, albeit with more bourgeois aspirations, aspirations which – economically at least – never materialised for Jacob himself. While class status can be a slippery concept, the Freud family’s hand-to-mouth economic existence, their inability to sustain a consistent home address, and Jacob’s relatively unskilled and unsuccessful working life all point to this conclusion. So do Freud’s own accounts of his life, from his childhood through to this early adulthood. Commenting, for example, on a somewhat clumsy and sentimentalised oil painting from about 1868 of Jacob and Amalia’s children, Freud dryly noted that ‘The painter . . . has graciously overlooked the holes in the soles of my shoes’, which his son Martin linked to the family’s early poverty.⁸

Freud would privately tell Wilhelm Fliess in September 1897 of the ‘severe [financial] worries that robbed me of my youth’, while two years later noted ‘the helplessness of [my own early] poverty’.⁹ In 1930, when more comfortably off, Freud would publicly declare in a footnote in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that: ‘Anyone who has tasted the miseries of poverty in his own youth and has experienced the indifference and arrogance of the well-to-do, should . . . [understand and support] endeavours to fight against the inequality of wealth among men and all it leads to’.¹⁰ In the same vein Freud would write in his evocative 1936 open letter to Romain Rolland (1866–1944), ‘A disturbance of memory on the Acropolis’, of the psychic struggle in going beyond his early paternal and class horizons, and the work of mourning that this triumph necessitated.¹¹

Eva Laible had documented Freud’s younger brother Alexander receiving a tuition waiver for his *Gymnasium* fees in 1879 and Freud himself receiving grants from two Jewish philanthropic foundations to help fund his medical training in 1878 and 1879, as well as financial support for his undergraduate research visits to Trieste and post-doctoral study in Paris with Jean-Martin Charcot.¹² Independently, Ernst Brücke supported Freud’s candidature for a post as an assistant at the Physiological Institute in Graz, tellingly writing that: ‘*he is a very poor Jew*, who would



Image 1.1 Jacob and Amalia's children (left to right) Sigismund, Esther (Dolfi), Alexander, Anna, Paula, Marie (Mitzi), and Rosa, in a now lost contemporary oil painting, c.1868

Source: Chronicle/Alamy

have to live on his salary, which, incidentally, he would manage easily, given his simple and regular way of life'.¹³

Freud scholars readily acknowledge Jacob's lack of business success. Peter Gay, for example, depicted Jacob as 'generally impecunious', before proceeding to describe him as 'An incurable optimist at least on the surface, he was a small merchant with insufficient resources to cope with the industrializing world around him'.¹⁴ However, in a disguised autobiographical fragment, Freud would later suggest that he 'was the child of people who were originally well-to-do and who, I fancy, lived comfortably enough in that little corner of the provinces'.¹⁵ This family romance (wherein origins are more or less aggrandised), originally identified by Siegfried Bernfeld as pertaining to Freud's imagined early childhood,¹⁶ depicts the Freuds in mid-nineteenth-century Freiberg as a middle-class bourgeois family. Writers have understandably and correctly tended to moderate this claim,¹⁷ yet more often proceed to socially frame the family through the lens of the history of European Jewry and anti-Semitism to the neglect of intersectional factors such as social class and poverty.¹⁸

Characterologically, Jacob was not a stern forbidding man by any means. Surviving accounts depict him as gentle, discursive, relatively democratic, fond of Jewish aphorisms and jokes, thoughtful, and a committed reader amongst other qualities. His granddaughter, Judith Bernays Heller (1885–1977), lived with him and his family in 1892 to 1893 and later described him as dividing:

his time between reading the Talmud (in the original) at home, sitting in a coffee house, and walking in the parks. . . . Tall and broad, with a long beard, he was very kind and gentle, and humorous in the bargain. . . . [He] lived somewhat aloof from the others in his family, reading a great deal – German and Hebrew (not Yiddish) – and seeing his own friends away from home. He would come home for meals, but took no real part in the general talk of the others. . . . But what I think struck me most about my maternal grandfather was how . . . he remained quiet and imperturbable, not indifferent, but not disturbed, never out of temper and never raising his voice.¹⁹

A regular visitor to Freud's apartment at Berggasse 19 during the 1890s, Jacob made a vivid impression on those he met. Freud's son Martin (1889–1967) described how:

Every member of my family loved Jakob and treated him with great respect. . . . He was terribly nice with us children. He brought us small presents and he used to tell us stories, mostly with a twinkle in his great brown eyes, as if he wanted to say, 'Isn't everything we are doing and saying here a great joke?'.²⁰

Freud too loved, admired, and identified with his father,²¹ but his relationship with him was complex. From his pre-adolescence, Freud was also wont to construe Jacob as an occasional disappointment, as a less-than-heroic figure, and, as Daniel Boyarin notes, as a somewhat traditional, gentle, eastern European Jew rather than the 'tough' or 'muscle' Jew of western modernity.²² A key event in that context for Freud came when he was 10 or 12 years old with Jacob's relating to him what we may here call the parable of the fur hat, a story seemingly rooted in his early religious orthodoxy. While walking as a young man one Saturday in Freiberg, Jacob was racially assaulted by a Christian, who, having knocked his new *shtreimel* off his head and into the mud, shouted 'Jew! Get off the pavement!' Jacob's response was to quietly retrieve his hat from the road. At the time, Freud thought this was 'unheroic conduct on the part of the big strong man',²³ this catalysing his interest in Hannibal and his father Hamilcar Barca as alternative stereotypically 'heroic' models of assertive Semitic masculinity.²⁴ The gentleness, containment, and equanimity Jacob embodied in the narrative, however, would in due course become better appreciated by Freud and would form an important counterbalance in both his thought and in psychoanalysis, helping to sustain a creative dialectic between dimensional constructs such as activity and passivity, radical and traditional, masculine and feminine. In its clinical practice, psychoanalysis would thus

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