

By general consensus THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS is Freud's major work, the one by which his name will probably be longest remembered. Freud's own opinion would seem to have agreed with this judgment. As he wrote in his preface to the third English edition, "Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime." It was a perfect example of serendipity, for the discovery of what dreams mean was made quite incidentally -- one might almost say accidentally -- when Freud was engaged in exploring the meaning of the psychoneuroses. ...

Freud very justly terms the interpretation of dreams the via reggia to the unconscious. ...

"Dreams contain the psychology of the neuroses in a nutshell." ...

The motto on the title page, from Virgil's AENEID, "Flectere si nequeo Superos. Acheronta movebo" ("If I cannot bend the gods above, then I will move the infernal regions"; VII, 312), with its obvious reference to the fate of the repressed, Freud had three years previously intended to use as a heading for the chapter on "The Formation of Symptoms" in a projected book on the psychology of hysteria.

Six hundred copies of the book were printed, and it took eight years to sell them. In the first six weeks 123 copies were sold, and then 228 in the next two years. Freud was paid 522.40 guldren for it (\$209).

Writing eighteen months later Freud said that no scientific periodical, and only a few others, had mentioned the book. It was simply ignored.

Ernest Jones, THE LIFE AND WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD

The theory of repression is the pillar upon which the edifice of psychoanalysis rests. It is really the most essential part of it, and yet, it is nothing but the theoretical expression of an experience which can be repeatedly observed whenever one analyses a neurotic without the aid of hypnosis. One is then confronted with a resistance which opposes and blocks the analytic work by causing failures of memory. This resistance was always covered by the use of hypnosis; the history of psychoanalysis proper, therefore, starts with the technical innovation of the rejection of hypnosis. The theoretical value of the fact, that this resistance is connected with an amnesia, leads unavoidably to that concept of unconscious psychic activity which is peculiar to psychoanalysis, and distinguishes it markedly from the philosophical speculations about the unconscious. It may, therefore, be said that the psychoanalytic theory endeavors to explain two experiences, which result in a striking and unexpected manner during the attempt to trace back the morbid symptoms of a neurotic to their source in his life-history; viz., the facts of transference and of resistance. Every investigation which recognizes these two facts and makes them the starting-points of its work may call itself psychoanalysis, even if it leads to other results than my own. But whoever takes up other sides of the problem and deviates from these two assumptions will hardly escape the charge of interfering with the rights of ownership, if he insists upon calling himself a psychoanalyst...

I treated my discoveries as ordinary contributions to science and hoped that others would treat them in the same way. But the silence which followed my lectures, the void that formed about my person, and the insinuations directed at me, made me realize gradually that statements concerning the role of sexuality in the etiology of the neuroses cannot hope to be treated like other communications. I realized that henceforth I belonged to those who, according to Hebbel's expression, "have disturbed the world's sleep," and that I could not count upon being treated objectively and with toleration ...

Sigmund Freud, HISTORY OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC MOVEMENT

