

INTRODUCTION

Cold War Freud addresses the uneasy encounters of Freudian theories about desire, anxiety, aggression, guilt, trauma, and pleasure – and the very nature of the human self and its motivations – with the calamitous events of World War II and beyond. While psychoanalysis is often taken to be ahistorical in its view of human nature, the opposite is the case. The impact of epochal historical transformations on psychoanalytic premises and practices is particularly evident in the postwar decades. This was precisely when psychoanalysis gained the greatest traction, across the West, within medicine and mainstream belief alike. For in the course of the second half of the twentieth century, psychoanalytic thinking came consequentially to inflect virtually all other thought-systems – from the major religious traditions to the social science disciplines and from conventional advice literature to radical political protest movements. Psychoanalysis, in all its unruly complexity, became an integral part of twentieth-century social and intellectual history.

The heyday of intellectual and popular preoccupation with psychoanalysis reached from the 1940s to the 1980s – from postwar conservative consolidation to delayed-reaction engagement with the legacies of Nazism and the Holocaust, from the anti-Vietnam War movement and the concomitant inversion of generational and moral alignments to the confrontation with new Cold War dictatorships, and from the sexual revolution and the rise of women’s and gay rights to an intensified interest in learning from formerly colonized peoples in

2 / Cold War Freud

an – only unevenly – postcolonial world. The battles within and around psychoanalysis provided a language for thinking about the changes in what counted as truth about how human beings are, and what could and should be done about it. But the possible relationships between psychoanalysis and politics were fraught, and a permanent source of ambivalence.

Sigmund Freud died in 1939 in his London exile. Ever the self-reviser, he had tacked frequently between issues of clinical technique, anthropological speculation, and political opinion. For him, psychoanalysis was, at once, a therapeutic modality, a theory of human nature, and a toolbox for cultural criticism. In the years that followed, however, the irresolvable tensions between the therapeutic and the cultural-diagnostic potentials of psychoanalysis would be argued over not just by Freud's detractors but also by his disciples. And the stakes had changed, drastically. The conflicts between the various possible uses of psychoanalytic thinking were especially intense in the wake of the rupture in civilization constituted by the wild success of Nazism in the 1930s and the unprecedented enormity of mass murder in the 1940s. This was not just because of the ensuing dispersion of the analytic community, but above all because of the stark questions posed by the historical events themselves. Psychoanalysis, it turned out, could have both normative-conservative and socially critical implications. And while its practitioners and promoters careened often between seeking to explain dynamics in the most intimate crevices of fantasies and bodies and venturing to pronounce on culture and politics in the broadest senses of those terms, there was never a self-evident relationship between the possible political implications of psychoanalytic precepts, left, middle, or right, on the one hand, and the niceties of psychotherapeutic method or theoretical formulation, on the other. And neither of these matters matched up easily with the declarations of rupture or of fealty to Freud made on all sides.

In 1949, the first post-World War II meeting of the International Psychoanalytical Association was held in Zurich. World events had kept the IPA from meeting for more than a decade. In Zurich, the Welsh-born, London-based neurologist and psychoanalyst Ernest Jones – President of the IPA, one of the most respected exponents of psychoanalysis in Britain, longtime editor of the *International*

3 / Introduction

Journal of Psycho-Analysis, and soon to be Freud's official biographer – addressed the audience with a plea to stay away not just from anything that could be construed as politically subversive. In fact, he urged them to stay away from discussion of extrapsychic factors of any kind.

Or perhaps it was more of an order than a plea. Jones directed his listeners to focus strictly on “the primitive forces of the mind” and to steer clear of “the influence of sociological factors.”¹ In Jones' view, the lesson to be drawn from the recent past – particularly in view of National Socialism's conquest of much of the European continent along with the resultant acceleration of the psychoanalytic diaspora, as well as from the fact that, at the then-present moment, in countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain, psychoanalytic associations that had been shut down during the war were not being permitted to reconstitute themselves – was that politics of any kind was something best kept at arm's length. Jones' official justification for apoliticism, in short, lay in political events. (This justification was all the more peculiar, as it suppressed the fact that actually quite a bit of writing about such topics as war, aggression, and prejudice had been produced, also by British psychoanalysts, including Jones, in the 1930s and 1940s.)² Or, as he framed his argument: “We have to resist the temptation to be carried away, to adopt emotional short cuts in our thinking, to follow the way of politicians, who, after all, have not been notably successful in adding to the happiness of the world.” But his was a multifunctional directive. For avoiding discussion of politics and of extrapsychic dynamics had the added benefit of erasing from view Jones' own collusion with Sigmund and Anna Freud, during the war, in the exclusion of the Marxist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich from the rescue operations extended to most other refugee analysts (due to Reich's perceived political toxicity). And it had the further advantage of providing a formal repudiation of more sociologically oriented “neo-Freudian” trends that had come to prominence especially in the United States during the war years (and that Jones was interested in seeing shunted). Jones was adamant. While “the temptation is understandably great to add socio-political factors to those that are our special concern, and to re-read our findings in terms of sociology,” this was, he admonished – in a description that was actually a prescription – “a temptation which, one is proud to observe, has, with very few exceptions, been stoutly resisted.”³ Many psychoanalysts – in the USA, in Western and Central Europe and in Latin America – would come to

4 / Cold War Freud

heed Jones' counsel, whether out of personal predilection or institutional pressures, or some combination of the two.

More than two decades and ten biennial meetings later, however, at the IPA congress in Vienna in 1971 – a meeting which Anna Freud, two years earlier, had agreed could be dedicated to studying the topic of aggression (the proposal to do so had been put forward by the Pakistani British psychoanalyst Masud Khan, the American Martin Wangh, and the Argentinean Arnaldo Rascovsky) – the eminent West German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich stood before his peers and demanded that they take sociological and political matters seriously. “All our theories are going to be carried away by history,” Mitscherlich told his colleagues, speaking on the topic of “Psychoanalysis and the Aggression of Large Groups” – “unless,” as newspapers from the *Kansas City Times* to the *Herald Tribune* in Paris summarized his argument, “psychoanalysis is applied to social problems.”⁴ One evident context for Mitscherlich's remark was the war ongoing at that very moment in Vietnam. Indeed Mitscherlich went on to provoke his fellow analysts with warnings of how irrelevant their models and concepts of human nature would soon become with a fairly direct reference to that particular conflict: “I fear that nobody is going to take us very seriously if we continue to suggest that war comes about because fathers hate their sons and want to kill them, that war is filicide. We must, instead, aim at finding a theory that explains group behavior, a theory that traces this behavior to the conflicts in society that actuate the individual drives.”⁵ Mitscherlich also did not hesitate to invoke his own nation's history, noting that “collective phenomena demand a different sort of understanding than can be acquired by treating neuroses. The behaviour of the German people during the Nazi rule and its aftermath showed how preshaped character structure and universal aggressive propaganda could dovetail into each other in a quite specific manner to allow the unthinkable to become reality.”⁶ Moreover, and pointing to such texts as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Mitscherlich reminded the audience that Sigmund Freud himself had been highly interested in political and cultural phenomena – and thus that concern with extrapsychic conditions and forces would in no way imply a departure from the master's path. Nonetheless, and as the newspapers also reported, “Mitscherlich's suggestion that destructive aggressive behavior is provoked by social factors runs counter to current Freudian orthodoxy – that aggression derives from internal

5 / Introduction

psychic sources that are instinctual.”⁷ And while Mitscherlich’s politically engaged comments “evoked a burst of applause from younger participants [,][...] some of their elders sat in stony silence.”⁸ An emergent intergenerational, geographical, and ideological divide within the IPA had become unmistakable.

At the turn from the 1960s to the 1970s, the IPA was dominated by a handful of its British, but above all by its American members, many of whom Mitscherlich knew well from numerous travels and research stays in both countries.⁹ Why did Mitscherlich’s message not find a welcome resonance among his senior confreres? Mitscherlich’s barb – “all our theories are going to be carried away by history” – could sting his older American colleagues, and garner notice in the international press, not least because psychoanalysis in the USA was, in fact, at this moment, in a serious predicament. The “golden age” of American psychoanalysis that had run from roughly 1949 to 1969 was about to be brought to an end by the combined impact of: the feminist and gay rights movements with their numerous, highly valid complaints about the misogyny and homophobia endemic in postwar analysis; the rise of shorter-term and more behaviorally oriented therapies, but above all the explosion of pop self-help, much of which would expressly style itself in opposition to the expense and purported futility of years on the couch; and the antiauthoritarian climate in general. The turn inward and the emphasis on intrapsychic, or at most on intrafamilial, dynamics that had been so remarkably successful in the first two postwar decades had, in short, run aground.

Already two years earlier, at the occasion of the IPA congress meeting in Rome in 1969, younger West German, Swiss, Italian, and French analysts and analysts-in-training had organized a “counter-congress” to register their dissent from what they perceived as the authoritarianism and inadequate engagement with social issues of the day among the leaders of the international psychoanalytic community. More than 100 participants showed up for several days of engaged discussion (at a restaurant within a fifth of a mile of the Cavalieri Hilton, where the registered congress participants were housed in upscale splendor). The IPA was accused – as the dollar signs replacing the final letters in the poster criticizing the main “Congre\$\$” made all too clear – of caring more about lucrative professional self-protection than about excellence in clinical practice, to say nothing of pressing political matters (see Figure 1).¹⁰ Mitscherlich – together with the

6 / Cold War Freud

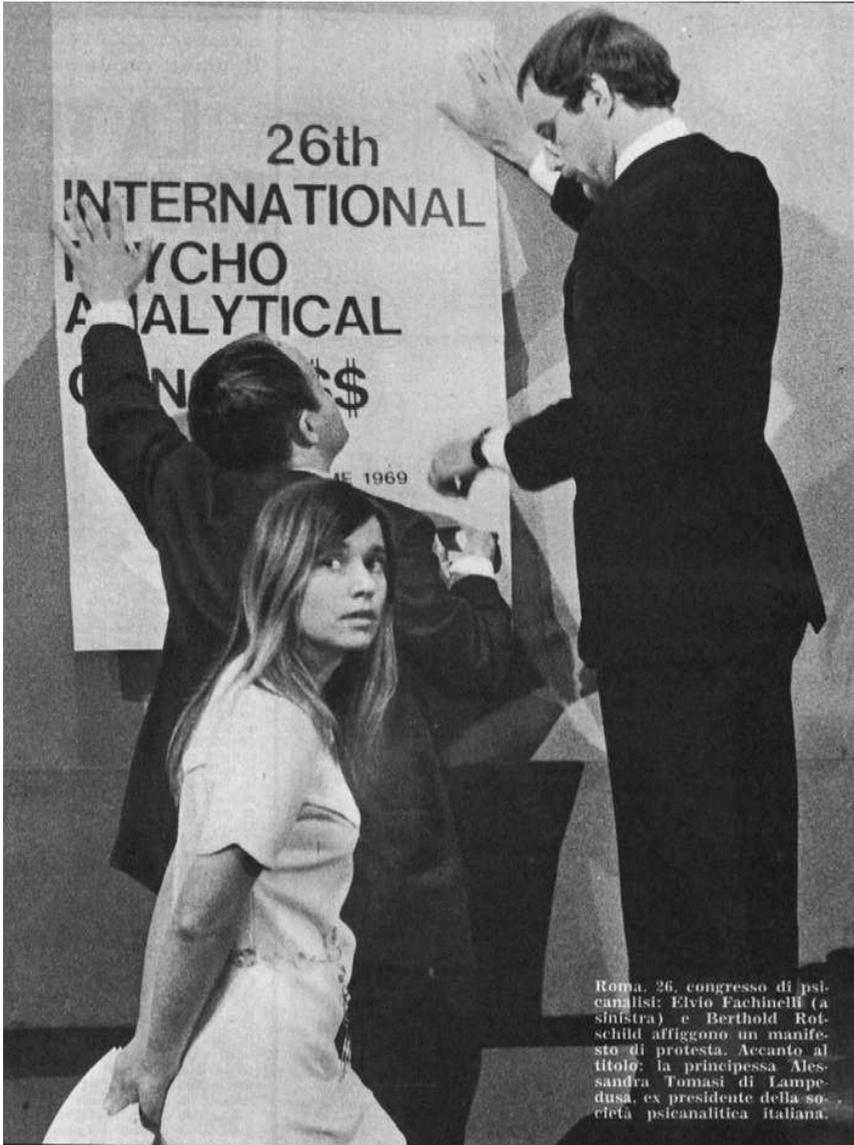


Figure 1 Marianna Bolko, Elvio Fachinelli, and Berthold Rothschild – coorganizers of the “counter-congress” in Rome, July–August 1969 – hanging a poster critical of the International Psychoanalytical Association congress’ program and professional priorities. The accompanying article in the Italian magazine *L’Espresso* covered both the congress and the counter-congress, but was clearly most fascinated by what it described as the counter-congress’ claims that American psychoanalysts were “seeking hegemony over the unconscious.”

7 / Introduction

Swiss psychoanalysts Paul Parin and Fritz Morgenthaler – had been among only a tiny handful of prominent senior members of the IPA who had shown support for the counter-congress (although Jacques Lacan had flown in from Paris when he learned how much excitement and media coverage the counter-congress was engendering).¹¹ And Mitscherlich had also delivered a speech at the main congress in which he expressed sympathy for youth “protest and revolution.”¹² In Rome, the young European dissidents, joined by several Latin American, especially Argentinean, analysts (notably also more senior Latin American psychoanalysts had been irritated by their inadequate representation among those regularly chosen to be IPA presenters), launched a network called “Plataforma.”¹³ This network would link radicals in Latin America and Europe for the duration of the next two decades – a linkage which was deeply to shape the subsequent clinical and conceptual work of the participants.¹⁴

For, as it happened, psychoanalysis globally was not in decline. On the contrary, what was really going on was that the geographical and generational loci of creativity and influence were shifting. Psychoanalysis was about to enjoy a second “golden age,” this one within Western and Central Europe, and (although complicated both by brutal repressions and by self-interested complicities under several dictatorial regimes) also in Latin America.¹⁵ This second golden age, from the late 1960s through the late 1980s, was sustained not least by the New Left generation of 1968 and by those among their elders, Mitscherlich, Parin, and Morgenthaler among them, who were in sympathy with New Left concerns. The New Left was, simply, *the* major motor for the restoration and cultural consolidation of psychoanalysis in Western and Central Europe and for the further development of psychoanalysis in Latin America as well.¹⁶ But it was a distinctly different Freud that these rebels resurrected. Or rather: one could say that there was not one Freud circulating in the course of the Cold War era, and not even only a dozen, but rather hundreds.

We have been living through a contemporary moment of renewed interest in Freud and in the evolution of psychoanalysis. Already in 2006, the American historian John C. Burnham detected the emergence of a “historiographical shift” that he dubbed “The New Freud Studies.” Burnham observed that the opening to scholars of a massive

8 / Cold War Freud

archive of primary sources that had long been sealed from public access – especially the collection at the Sigmund Freud Archives at the US Library of Congress – would inevitably stimulate an efflorescence of fresh work. (Much of the material in that collection, which was begun in 1951 and includes a wealth of correspondence from the first half of the twentieth century as well as extensive interviews conducted in the early 1950s with dozens of individuals who knew Freud personally, has indeed, between 2000 and 2015, finally been derestricted.)¹⁷ Burnham surmised that because the history of psychoanalysis had for so long been written by insider-practitioners rather than historians, and that these insiders were unabashedly “using the history of psychoanalysis as a weapon in their struggles to control the medical, psychological, and philosophical understandings of Freud and the Freudians” – and hence tended to produce writing that “had its origin in whiggish justifications of later versions of theory and clinical practice” – the involvement of outsiders would change how the history of the field was told.¹⁸ And so it has been – although it remains critical to add that insider-practitioners have written superb histories as well, and may often have been better positioned to explicate such matters as the evolution of clinical technique (and, of course, there are individuals who are both analysts and historians and bring that double vision creatively to bear).¹⁹

One of the earliest results of fresh perspectives coming from outside, already in evidence in the midst of the so-called “Freud Wars” of the mid-1990s – wars over scholarly access to the archive but also over the meaning of Freud’s legacy – was a far deepened understanding of Freud’s own historical contextualization.²⁰ Sander Gilman’s *Freud, Race, and Gender* (1994) signaled a move toward placing Freud more firmly in the antisemitic atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Vienna and the consequences of the “feminization” of male Jews for Freud’s theories of women; numerous scholars have since followed Gilman’s lead.²¹ Mari Jo Buhle’s marvelously lucid *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (1998) and Eli Zaretsky’s pioneering *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (2004) took the story of the psychoanalytic movement forward, with both paying particular attention to the vicissitudes of its recurrent encounters with feminism and with both offering especially important insights into the development of psychoanalysis in the USA.²² But Burnham proved correct that additional access to theretofore unseen

9 / Introduction

primary sources would allow a repositioning of Freud's work in a yet richer matrix of alliances, rivalries, and mutual influencings.²³ A stellar example of the insights gained was George Makari's magisterial *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (2008).²⁴ And in 2012 Burnham published an anthology, *After Freud Left: A Century of Psychoanalysis in America*, which brought together literary critics and historians to consider the place of psychoanalysis in key phases of US history.²⁵

Since then, ever new areas of inquiry have opened up. Among other things, the increasing internationalization of historical research has complicated what we thought we knew about the early diffusion of psychoanalytic ideas. As the British historian John Forrester noted as recently as 2014: "Much of the history of psychoanalysis really is lost from sight – because we have been looking for too long in the wrong places." In particular, Forrester continued – here echoing Burnham – "we have been taking on trust not only the official histories of psychoanalysis, suffering from all the distortions that winners' history always introduces, ... but also the presumption that key figures in later history were also central to the earlier phases of its history."²⁶ But another broad trend has been to redirect attention beyond Freud, toward post-Freudian actors and the by now nearly infinite permutations of Freudian concepts that have circulated, and been recirculated – and thereby repeatedly modified – and the many uses to which these concepts have been put. As Matt fytche, Forrester's successor as editor of the journal *Psychoanalysis and History*, noted in 2016:

Psychoanalytic history may begin with Freud and his colleagues, or thereabouts, but that was simply the opening chapter. What has become increasingly fascinating, for historians and psychoanalysts alike, are the multiple sequels beyond Vienna – in the 1930s, the 1950s, the 1980s and now the 2000s – during which psychoanalysis has reached across various geographical and cultural boundaries, and embedded itself in many other fields, including modern psychology, philosophy, literature, politics and the social sciences and humanities more broadly.²⁷

The outpouring of new work within which *Cold War Freud* is situated has developed along two main axes. One encompasses histories locating post-Freudian actors either in national cultures or in

10 / Cold War Freud

transnational political conflicts – including explorations of the role of psychoanalytic ideas in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Among the most significant recent ones are Camille Robcis’ *The Law of Kinship: Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, and the Family in France* (2013), Michal Shapira’s *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (2013), Elizabeth Lunbeck’s *The Americanization of Narcissism* (2014), and Erik Linstrum’s *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (2016), as well as the anthologies edited by Mariano Ben Plotkin and Joy Damousi, *Psychoanalysis and Politics: Histories of Psychoanalysis Under Conditions of Restricted Political Freedom* (2012), and by Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jensen, and Richard C. Keller, *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties* (2011).²⁸ Also relevant here is the work-in-progress of Omnia El Shakry on “The Arabic Freud: The Unconscious and the Modern Subject.”²⁹ Several books within this cluster are specifically concerned to recover politically committed versions of psychoanalysis. The most noteworthy of these are *A Psychotherapy for the People: Toward a Progressive Psychoanalysis* (2012), co-written by the psychoanalysts Lewis Aron and Karen Starr, and historian Eli Zaretsky’s *Political Freud: A History* (2015); among Zaretsky’s foci are the historical uses made of psychoanalysis by African American activists.³⁰ The other cluster of scholarship, at times overlapping with the first, and following on a prior wave of preoccupation with feminist challenges to the psychoanalytic movement, involves the efflorescence of histories pursuing “queerer” readings of psychoanalysis and seeking to make sense of the depth and doggedness of the homophobia that became practically endemic to the psychoanalytic movement, despite Freud’s own repudiation of it. This group could be said to have its roots in a special issue of *GLQ* published in 1995: *Pink Freud*, edited by the literary critic Diana Fuss.³¹ Since then, it has been growing steadily, although it has tended to draw in psychoanalysts and cultural studies scholars more than historians.³²

Cold War Freud adds to these studies in multiple ways. Each of the six chapters takes up a different set of at once ethically and politically intense and long-perplexing, even stubbornly refractory, issues. They include: the relation of psychoanalysis to organized religion at the very onset of the Cold War; the tenaciously flexible hold of hostility to homosexuality; the striking time lag in acknowledging the existence