
A PSYCHOANALYTIC
CHILDHOOD



Me, aged one, with my father, Bedford, May 1949

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs were taken by my mother, Margaret Stone Zilboorg.

CAROLINE ZILBOORG

A PSYCHOANALYTIC CHILDHOOD

A MEMOIR OF GROWING UP IN
MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY NEW YORK

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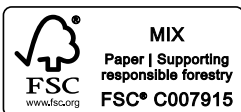
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FREUD MUSEUM LONDON SERIES

The Freud Museum London and Karnac Books have joined forces to publish a new book series devoted to an examination of the life and work of Sigmund Freud, alongside the biographies and contributions of other significant figures in the history of psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and depth psychology. The series will feature works of outstanding scholarship and readability, including biographical studies, institutional histories, and archival investigations. New editions of historical classics as well as translations of little-known works from the early history of psychoanalysis will also be considered for inclusion.

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From Freud's Death Bed to Laing's Missing Tooth
by Brett Kahr

To my own family

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About the author

Caroline Zilboorg is a Life Member of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, and a Founding Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council. Her books include the two-volume *The Life of Gregory Zilboorg*; *Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their Lives in Letters*; *The Masks of Mary Renault: A Literary Biography*; and the historical novel *Transgressions*. She lives in Brittany, France, where she continues to write.

Series editor's foreword

Professor Brett Kahr*

Sigmund Freud simply adored books.

Throughout his lifetime, he accumulated an extensive collection of literally thousands upon thousands of volumes, which covered such a broad range of topics from literature and history to religion and medicine, including works by such scriptive geniuses as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Honoré de Balzac, as well as those by such scientific originators as Charles Darwin and Jean-Martin Charcot.

Not only did Freud purchase numerous books but, as we know, he authored a very large number of texts about his own highly original and groundbreaking work in the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis, ranging from the *Studien über Hysterie* (Breuer & Freud, 1895a), released in English as the *Studies on Hysteria* (Breuer & Freud, 1895b), which appeared in print at the very outset of his career, in collaboration with his mentor Dr Josef Breuer, to *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen* (Freud, 1939a), known in English as *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 1939b), and, subsequently, as *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays* (Freud, 1939c), which he completed shortly before his death.

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When the Jews began to flee from Nazi-occupied Vienna during the late 1930s, most escaped with little more than the clothes on their bodies. But Freud, owing to his already well-established global celebrity status, had the privilege of departing from Austria with not only his priceless collection of antiquities but, also, with many of his books as well, more than 2,000 of which remain housed and cared for beautifully at Maresfield Gardens by the staff of the Freud Museum London to this very day.

During the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, I enjoyed the great privilege of having served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Freud Museum London and, also, of Freud Museum Publications; and, in that capacity, I collaborated with Carol Seigel, then the Director of the museum, and Dr Stephen Setterberg, then the Publisher of Karnac Books of London; and, collectively, we agreed, with the blessing of the Board of Trustees, to create a new monograph series—the “Freud Museum London Series”—for which we would commission a range of books by accomplished authors, documenting the history and biography of Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and other founding figures of the psychoanalytical profession, as well as other historically related topics in the field. And happily, in 2021, we launched the “Freud Museum London Series”.

In order to initiate this scholarly project, I wrote the inaugural title for our new monograph series, namely, *Freud's Pandemics: Surviving Global War, Spanish Flu, and the Nazis* (Kahr, 2021), examining the ways in which Freud navigated his very own multiple pandemics. Although those of us who live in the twenty-first century had to endure the coronavirus pandemic between 2020 and 2022 and beyond, Freud had to confront even more horrific challenges, having soldiered through a lifetime of anti-Semitic abuse and hatred, as well as two world wars, and, moreover, the so-called Spanish flu of 1918–1920, which impacted upon his entire family and which resulted in the premature death of his beloved middle daughter Sophie Freud Halberstadt. Additionally, Freud had to suffer from his own fast-metastasising oral cancer as well as the invasion of Vienna by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. In view of the fact that Freud lived until the age of eighty-three years—quite a long time for someone born in the mid-nineteenth century—I strongly sensed that we might all be able to learn something important about the art

of surviving trauma and terror by studying Freud's personal biography in greater detail. Hence, my book on Freud's pandemics endeavours to provide not only an intimate account of his private struggles, but, also, an examination of the ways in which his mentally sturdy mind permitted him to continue to flourish despite those non-stop devastations.

Once we established this new collection of books, I became appointed as Series Editor of the "Freud Museum London Series" and, with the blessing of both Carol Seigel, our past director, and that of her successor, Dr Giuseppe Albano, our esteemed new Director, and with the tremendous support of Kate Pearce, our creative Publisher, we have already commissioned several more titles, currently undergoing completion.

In order to facilitate the growth of this new project, I subsequently produced a further volume for the series, which appeared in print in September, 2023, entitled *Hidden Histories of British Psychoanalysis: From Freud's Death Bed to Laing's Missing Tooth* (Kahr, 2024), inspired by my love of Sigmund Freud and the Freud Museum London. In this text, I have endeavoured to offer readers a wide-ranging and detailed history of the psychoanalytical movement in the United Kingdom by having provided portraits of many of the leading figures in the field, some of whom I had the great honour of interviewing personally during the 1980s and 1990s.

That book includes two chapters about Freud as an "English" psychoanalyst, as he *did*, in fact, practise clinical work at Maresfield Gardens during the last months of his life in London; and, in spite of having grown up as a native German speaker, he eventually came to talk in English with much clarity and success. Hence, it would, indeed, be appropriate to conceptualise Sigmund Freud as one of the founders of British psychoanalysis as well as Austrian psychoanalysis.

This publication also provides a brief study of the very "death bed" upon which Freud passed away on 23rd September, 1939—a small couch for medically compromised patients, different to the famous psychoanalytical divan. This "death bed" remains carefully stored in the archives at Maresfield Gardens and I enjoyed the opportunity of examining this moving piece of furniture in great detail and of writing about the "death bed" in this new text.

I have also offered portraits of aspects of the lives and works of such outstanding leaders in the British psychoanalytical community

as Dr Donald Winnicott and Dr John Bowlby—two of the founders of the child mental health movement—as well as the little-known achievements of Bowlby's wife, Mrs Ursula Bowlby, who also championed psychoanalysis. Additionally, I provide studies of such influential figures as Mrs Marion Milner, Mrs Enid Balint, Mr Masud Khan, and Dr Ronald Laing.

I have framed this historical survey of British psychoanalysis with both an "Introduction" entitled "My Love of Deceased Psychoanalysts", and with a "Conclusion" about "How to Be Intimate with a Corpse: The Role of Psychoanalytical Historiography", in which I explore the benefits and the joys of immersing oneself in our professional ancestry, explaining that we all have much more to learn from our forefathers and foremothers. In many respects, I believe that these chapters certainly encapsulate the vision of our new museum monograph series, which might well be summarised as an attempt to archive the past and to learn from the genius of our predecessors.

The current book in this series, a unique autobiography entitled *A Psychoanalytic Childhood: A Memoir of Growing Up in Mid-Twentieth-Century New York* by Dr Caroline Zilboorg, provides us with a most gripping insight into the life of a remarkable woman whose father, Dr Gregory Zilboorg, served as one of the true pioneers of global psychoanalysis. In this hugely readable and highly engaging title, Caroline Zilboorg, a Life Member at Clare Hall, at the University of Cambridge, and, moreover, a Founding Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council, has drawn upon her extensive literary skills and has provided us with a wonderful encapsulation of her early years as the daughter of a true leader in the field.

A wonderful writer with a staggeringly detailed memory of her early years, Caroline Zilboorg has provided readers with a full and honest encapsulation of life in a pioneering psychoanalytical home and transports us into the very physicality of her father's transformative consulting room. This book not only offers us detailed glimpses of the life of a young girl who would become an impressive woman, as well as insights into the nature of her interactions with a brilliant founder of the psychoanalytical movement, it also reminds us of the genius of Dr Gregory Zilboorg, a distinguished innovator not only of clinical Freudian practice but, also, of such fields as forensic psychoanalysis,

schizophrenia studies, and, moreover, of psychoanalytical historiography itself.

One might argue that our “Freud Museum London Series” would not exist if Gregory Zilboorg had not already helped to inaugurate the field of the history of psychoanalysis, especially in view of his iconic books such as *The Medical Man and the Witch During the Renaissance* (Zilboorg, 1935) and, most memorably, *A History of Medical Psychology* (Zilboorg & Henry, 1941). Indeed, Caroline Zilboorg (2022a, 2022b) has already published a hugely well-researched, two-volume biography of her very own father, which offers much comprehensive understanding of that man not only as a clinician but, also, as an historian. I highly recommend all of these tomes, written by the father, along with Caroline Zilboorg’s most recent and highly personal memoir. Richly enhanced with unique, private family photographs, this book will serve as a great template for many future autobiographers indeed.

In years to come, we hope to commission more titles about a wide range of historical topics—whether scholarly investigations, personal memoirs, oral histories, or archival investigations—and we warmly encourage aspiring authors with projects-in-the-making to approach us, as we would be very keen to discuss potential books for the future.

We trust that publications about the life and work of the Freud family and about the history of psychoanalysis more broadly will assist us not only with the preservation of the very best of Freudian psychology but, also, will help to prepare us for centuries to come.

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CHAPTER ONE

Prologue: Homage to Freud

Paying formal homage to Sigmund Freud took me nearly as long as paying homage to my father in my biography *The Life of Gregory Zilboorg*, the result in 2021 of ten years of research and a lifetime of reflection. Homage to Freud, itself an oblique homage to my father, would be present, of course, in my understanding of human psychology, an understanding that informed not only my relationships with other people and myself but my understanding of literature, and I would make my career as a literary scholar, not as a psychoanalyst. Drawn to language and theory but above all to narrative, I would become a biographer, but it was not as a biographer that I first visited Freud's homes in both Austria and London. Given my particular personal experiences, capacities, and inclinations, I had been approaching Freud without knowing it from earliest childhood, but paying formal and conscious homage—as one does when visiting a physical place where a famous person once lived—would take years and be a matter not only of opportunity but of practical priorities and mixed feelings.

When I first visited Vienna, there was no Freud Museum at 19 Berggasse. I was nineteen; it was 1967, the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. My father had been dead for eight years and I was en route to Yalta and Sochi on the Black Sea, to Tbilisi in Georgia, to Kiev

in Ukraine, to Moscow and Leningrad, now Saint Petersburg—in other words, to the heart of the Russian Empire in which my father had been born seventy-seven years earlier, in which he had grown up and become a doctor, participated in the First World War as a young psychiatrist and then, during the 1917 revolution, as secretary to the labour minister in the provisional government that overthrew the tsar. I would see first-hand the cities from which, escaping Lenin and his army in 1918, my father had fled, seeking refuge and regeneration in New York City. It was explicitly my father rather than Freud who was on my mind that summer, my father's life rather than Freud or his psychoanalytic theories.

While the Freud Museum in Vienna only became a museum in 1971, I could have looked up at the windows of the apartment at 19 Berggasse where Freud lived for forty-seven years, having moved there in 1891, the year after my father's birth. Anna Freud, her parents' sixth and youngest child, was born there four years later, and in June of 1927, on his first visit to Europe since 1919 and in the hope of meeting the great man, my father surely called there, although Freud—having celebrated his seventieth birthday with great fanfare on the sixth of May—had by then already left on his summer holiday. Perhaps my father first met Anna there; perhaps he had tea with her in the family's front room. In 1967, I did not know these facts, and not until researching my father's life did I reconstruct his visit to Austria. In sum, I did not call at Freud's former home. I did not even walk down the Viennese street with its graceful buildings. I had my hands full as an au pair to a travelling family whose professional life had determined our itinerary. In all honesty, however, I wasn't yet ready to pay homage to either Freud or my father: visiting 19 Berggasse in the summer of 1967 never crossed my conscious mind.

It did cross my mind, however, twenty-eight years later. I was then travelling with my husband—like me a university lecturer—and our four children, aged sixteen, fifteen, twelve, and ten. My edition of First World War letters between the British poet Richard Aldington and his then wife, the American poet Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), had come out in 1992. My edition of their later correspondence had appeared earlier in 1995, the year of my second visit to Vienna.

One of the many things that had drawn me to the project was H.D.'s interest in psychoanalysis. Haunted by the war and the failure of her

marriage to Aldington, she had sought out Havelock Ellis in 1918. By the early 1920s, she was reading Freud and in 1931 entered treatment with Mary Chadwick at the Tavistock Clinic. She continued analysis with Hanns Sachs for brief periods in both Berlin and Prague, and finally for three months in early 1932 and five weeks in late 1934, H.D. underwent treatment in Vienna with Freud himself. She would seek analysis, intermittent and sustained, throughout the rest of her life: with Walter Schmideberg in London later in the 1930s and then, following a psychotic episode in 1946, in the residential Klinik Brunner near Zurich. In the 1950s, more physically than psychologically frail, H.D. resumed residence at the clinic, where she had regular sessions with the Swiss analyst Erich Heydt.

H.D.'s relationship with psychoanalysis explicitly and implicitly informed her writing, fostering a particular angle of vision in which dreams, impressions, and memories would become as real as consciously observable facts and external realities. H.D.'s interior life was finally more important to her art, more significant for her as a writer than everyday experience. It is not surprising, then, that her poetry collections have titles like *Sea Garden* and *A Dead Priestess Speaks* or that among her fiction are *Palimpsest*, *The Mystery*, and *Magic Mirror*. While all her work is to some degree autobiographical, her non-fiction, although selective and occasionally veiled, is explicitly so. She would discuss her struggle to come to terms with the psyche as early as *Notes on Thought and Vision* in 1919, but her effort to understand both the experience of psychoanalysis and her own life as a woman and writer through the lens of psychoanalysis is nowhere clearer than in the book entitled *Tribute to Freud*.

By 1995 I was ready to pay my own tribute to Freud by visiting his apartment in Vienna, and I must have sensed a story in it, suspected I might discover there some window onto my father's life, some connection with my own. The two volumes of Aldington–H.D. correspondence, with their extensive notes and commentary, would together form a heavily documented epistolary biography. Analysis—"close reading" informed by emotional as well as intellectual, even psychoanalytic understanding—certainly played an important role in the narrative I presented, as did simply getting the facts right, which is often not such a simple matter. The visit to 19 Berggasse might also, I felt, somehow compensate for my not having acknowledged Freud in 1967.