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PART ONE

Freud's Life: The First Thirty Years

CHAPTER 1

A Traumatic Infancy

Freud has emerged as a person stranger and less explicable by his own theories than he himself realized.

—Charles Rycroft

SIGMUND FREUD was born in 1856 in Freiberg, Moravia (today Příbor, in the Czech Republic), a small market town one hundred fifty miles north of Vienna, the first child of the newly married Jacob and Amalia Nathanson Freud. Freiberg was then part of the Austro-Hungarian or Hapsburg Empire, a vast region that included parts of what later became Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukraine, Yugoslavia, and present-day Austria. Of the 4,500 inhabitants of Freiberg at that time, only 130—about 3 percent—were Jews like the Freuds; there were an equally small number of Protestants. The rest of the townsfolk—over 4,000—were Czech Catholics. The new baby was named Sigismund Schlomo. Sigismund was a German name from the word *Sieg,* or victory. Schlomo—Solomon in English—was a Hebrew name bestowed in honor of Jacob's recently deceased father. The two names reflected the historical and cultural milieu of Jacob and his family, positioned between traditional Jewish life and the new path of emancipation and assimilation that was just opening to them in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Jews had been a persecuted minority in Europe for centuries, their fortunes waxing and waning at different times and in different countries. Under some progressive regimes, they prospered as merchants, traders, and advisers to kings, while at other times they were subject to oppression, legal restrictions, banishment, and pogroms in which they were slaughtered by the thousands. Such persecution forced families to move from one country to another, and the father of Kallamon Jacob Freud—to give him his full name—had settled in what was then the Austro-Hungarian region of Galicia (now part of the Ukraine), in the village of Tysmenitz. During Jacob's youth, half the population of Tysmenitz was Jewish; many were traders and merchants, and the town was also a center of Jewish learning and scholarship. Jews in the village, or *shtetl,* of Tysmenitz followed centuries-old Orthodox traditions: they celebrated their own holidays, studied the Talmud, adhered to dietary laws, and spoke Yiddish among themselves, all of which isolated them from their gentile neighbors. Forbidden from owning land, they served as merchants, shopkeepers, and traders. As in many of the shtetls of eastern Europe, the Jews interacted with their gentile neighbors, yet constituted a world unto themselves with their separate religious practices, customs, and language.

Jacob's maternal grandfather, Siskind Hofmann, traveled between Galicia and Moravia, trading in wool, linen, honey, and tallow; Jacob became his junior partner and would work as a merchant and salesman for the rest of his life. His travels took Jacob away from the narrow confines of the shtetl and introduced him to a somewhat wider world. These journeys took him to Freiberg, where he became a permanent resident in 1852. Sally Kanner, whom he had married as a very young man, did not join him on his travels; she died in Tysmenitz before he moved to Freiberg. His two sons from this first marriage—Emanuel and Philipp—joined their father in Freiberg to work in his business there.

As the nineteenth century progressed, discrimination toward Jews gradually lessened. The rise of the Enlightenment—particularly in Germany—brought about increased religious tolerance. The Austrian emperor Joseph II issued a Tolerance Ordinance in 1781 that did away with many restrictions on the Jews in his realm, and Prussia officially emancipated its Jewish population in 1812. The revolution that shook western Europe in 1848 had, as one benefit, greater religious freedom. Franz Joseph, emperor of Austria-Hungary throughout much of Freud's lifetime, granted full rights to Austrian Jews in 1849. When Jacob set up in Freiberg as a trader in wool, he was the beneficiary of these new freedoms. The old prejudices did not disappear, of course; Jacob was still a "tolerated Jew" who had to apply to the authorities every year for permission to pursue his business. Nevertheless, full political and civic rights and the abolition of many restrictions meant that Jews were in a far better position then they had been for centuries.

The new freedoms, along with contact with the world outside the shtetl, encouraged Jacob to shed many of the traditions of Jewish life. He was part of a generation in transition, people who were beginning to think of themselves as Austrians or Germans as much as Jews, who moved away from Orthodox religious practices and adopted the customs, mores, and languages of their new countries. Where his ancestors spoke Yiddish and wrote in Hebrew, Jacob—who knew these languages—conducted his business in German. By the time he married Amalia, his new family was set on this assimilated path: they continued to celebrate the traditional Jewish holidays of Purim and Passover, but more as festive events; the Orthodox practices of their forebears were gone and the new family was raised as culturally but not religiously Jewish. Still, with all the new freedom and assimilation, memories of persecution hovered in the air: there were many reminders in daily life of their position as Jews; the effect of centuries of mistreatment, and the possibility of new violence, could not be erased from their minds. They were, after all, a tiny minority in Freiberg, surrounded by people who did not share their history or religion.

Following the death of his first wife, Jacob may have married a woman named Rebecca, who apparently also died. It is not known for certain whether this woman even existed but, if she did, Freud as an adult showed no awareness of her, though she would have been known to his older half brothers and, no doubt, his mother. Jacob and Amalia Nathanson were married in 1855, when he was forty and she twenty. Jacob has been described as fair and, in the later words of his grandson Martin, tall and broad-shouldered. Photographs of him around the age of fifty reveal a handsome and distinguished-looking man. He was a person of pleasant manners, easygoing, with a sense of humor—he was, after all, a salesman—and, at the time of his marriage to Amalia, somewhat successful in business.

Little is known about Amalia Nathanson's background. She was born in the town of Brody in eastern Galicia and lived for a time in Odessa, where her older brothers settled. With her parents, and her younger brother Julius, she moved to Vienna when she was a child, and it was here that she and Jacob met. Her father was a merchant and the family, at least in later years, was not poor. She was an attractive young woman, slender and dark, and possessed of great vitality and a powerful personality. Jacob and Amalia were married by a rabbi affiliated with the Reform movement, a further sign of their move away from the Orthodox traditions of their ancestors.

Sigismund Schlomo Freud was the firstborn son of the new marriage between Jacob and Amalia. He was known as "Sigi" throughout his childhood and his mother still called him this when he was in his seventies, though he used the name Sigismund throughout adolescence, shortening it to Sigmund around the time he entered the university. Jacob, Amalia, and their infant son were soon joined by two additional babies. While Jacob's business seemed sufficient to support his family, they could afford no more than a single rented room above the locksmith shop of a Czech family named Zajic in a building that still stands in Příbor. The family's living conditions were cramped, and which continued for a number of years after they moved to Vienna, a situation that exposed little Sigi to many intimate details of his parents' lives; at this time, babies were born at home and nursed in the conjugal bed. And they died at home as well.

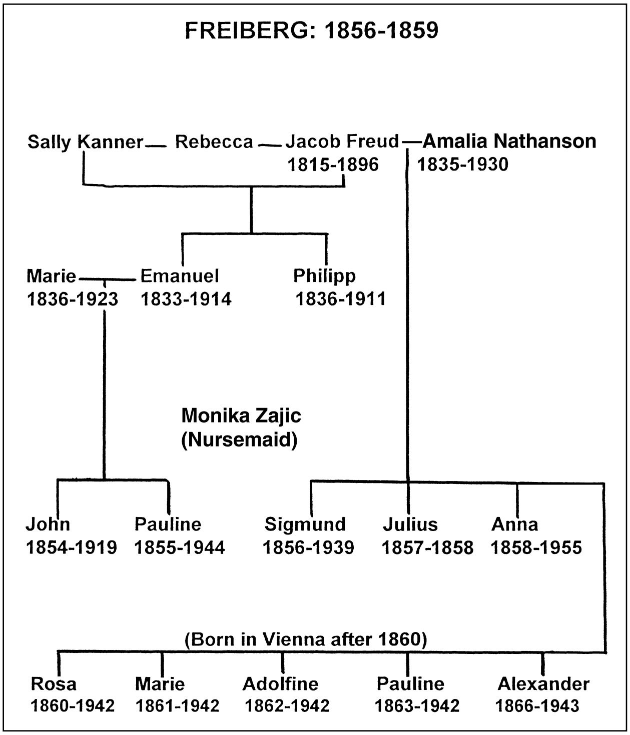
The young Freud was part of an extended family in Freiberg that made up a small world unto itself. Jacob's two grown sons from his first marriage—Emanuel, age twenty-four at the time of Sigmund's birth in 1856, and Philipp, age twenty—had moved to Freiberg to work with their father. Emanuel was married to a woman named Marie and they had two children of their own: a son John—Sigmund's nephew, though one year older—and a daughter Pauline, about seven months younger than Sigi, infants who would soon become his first playmates. Philipp, his unmarried half brother, lived across the street from Jacob and Amalia, while Emanuel, his wife, and his children occupied an apartment a few blocks away.

All of the adult Freuds worked together in the family business, buying wool woven by the local peasants, dyeing and finishing it, and selling it to manufacturers in other locations. Jacob was, in other words, a middleman whose business depended on contacts and trade with customers in other cities. Since the business required the participation of many of the family members, including Amalia, the infant Sigi was left with a nursemaid, a Czech woman who served as an important substitute mother in Amalia's absence. If we imagine things from the point of view of the very young Freud, his was a world of big people and small children: his parents and half brothers—who were uncle figures—his nephew and niece—who were really like cousins—and the three women who mothered him in various ways—his mother, his nursemaid, and Emanuel's wife, Marie. Interestingly, several of Freud's adult dreams, analyzed in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* depict him with three mothers.

Although Jacob, his older sons, and his new wife were relatively recent arrivals in Freiberg, he probably had some contacts from his earlier business dealings there. Nevertheless, their status as members of a tiny minority must have given them a sense of isolation, a state that would have turned them toward each other for social and emotional support. They did know at least one local Jewish family, the Flusses, whose father, Ignaz, also came from Tysmenitz and was in the same business as Jacob, and whose son, Emil, was the same age as Sigmund. Emil remained a friend after the family moved to Vienna, and other members of the Fluss clan played significant roles in Freud's adolescence.

Within the extended family, Sigmund had two playmates: the older John and the younger Pauline. Family members told how he and John played and scrapped together and described their misdeeds and teasing of the younger Pauline. As Freud himself later wrote to his confidant Wilhelm Fliess at the time of his self-analysis: "I have also long known the companion of my misdeeds between the ages of one and two years; it is my nephew, a year older than myself. . . . The two of us seem occasionally to have behaved cruelly to my niece, who was a year younger."

In a rare published account of his earliest years, Freud recalled playing in the fields of Freiberg with two other children and painted an idyllic pastoral scene. But whatever happiness there may have been was soon overtaken by a host of calamities. Even before Sigmund's birth, the family had been marked by death. Jacob lost his first wife, Sally, his second, Rebecca, and his father,


FREIBERG: 1856-1859
Sally Kanner
Rebecca
Jacob Freud
1815-1896
Amalia Nathanson
1835-1930
Marie
1836-1923
Emanuel
1833-1914
Philipp
1836-1911
Monika Zajic
(Nursemaid)
John
1854-1919
Pauline
1855-1944
Sigmund
1856-1939
Julius
1857-1858
Anna
1858-1955
(Born in Vienna after 1860)
Rosa
1860-1942
Marie
1861-1942
Adolfine
1862-1942
Pauline
1863-1942
Alexander
1866-1943

The Freud family tree.

Schlomo, the last just six months before his son was born. Emanuel and Philipp had lost their mother, their first stepmother, and their grandfather. These deaths were followed during the next years by a series of losses that would have powerful traumatic effects on the young boy.

The losses began when Amalia, quickly pregnant after she had Sigmund, gave birth to a second son, Julius. This new brother was Freud's first rival, a competitor who took his mother away from him when he was just eleven months old. She named the new baby after her own younger brother Julius, who had died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty, just a month before she gave birth to her second child. The infant Sigmund's first exposure to death followed close at hand; his baby brother died of an intestinal infection about six or eight months after he was born, when Sigmund was close to two. It is almost certain that the death occurred in the one-room apartment and that Freud was exposed to it. He certainly witnessed his parents' and older half brothers' reaction to this death.

Amalia was, in all probability, depressed following the death of her brother and his namesake, her half-year-old son. Although there is no direct account of her grief, it is an almost universal occurrence when a mother suffers the death of an infant. Not only did the very young Freud lose his mother to a rival, but she became unavailable in her unhappy state following her losses. Because the deaths of Jacob's first and second wives a few years earlier, and grandfather Schlomo's death shortly before Sigmund's birth, had been assimilated by the family, the acute periods of mourning would have passed. But the deaths of Amalia's brother and her new baby were fresh. It is a good guess that the loss of this baby, in the context of the other deaths, created a family atmosphere of mourning and depression. The infant Sigmund would have been immersed in this atmosphere at a very young age and, with only a limited understanding of death, must have felt vulnerable and fearful that he too might die, become sick, or disappear. The death of Julius and his mother's grief could be expected to set off highly threatening reactions in a child that small—fears that he would lose those he most needed—reactions that the bereaved parents would be little able to respond to, if they were even aware of them.

The losses of Freud's first two years produced long-lasting fears associated with maternal absence and death, fears illustrated by a terrifying dream he had at the age of eight or nine, which he recorded in his forties in *The Interpretation of Dreams.* The dream occurred at a time in his middle childhood when new babies were still being born and his mother was occasionally absent from home due to tuberculosis, the terrible disease of the nineteenth century. In the dream he saw his "beloved mother, with a peculiarly peaceful, sleeping expression on her features, being carried into the room by two or three people with bird's beaks and laid upon the bed." He associated the figures with funerals and "awoke in tears and screaming, and interrupted my parents' sleep." He wrote:

> The expression on my mother's features in the dream was copied from the view I had of my grandfather [mother's father] a few days before his death as he lay snoring in a coma. The interpretation carried out in the dream . . . must therefore have been that my mother was dying; the funerary relief fitted in with this. I awoke in anxiety, which did not cease till I had woken my parents up. I remember that I suddenly grew calm when I saw my mother's face, as though I needed to be reassured that she was not dead.

This anxiety dream was a clear example of the continuing power of Freud's fear of the death/loss of his mother. He "awoke in tears and screaming," his terror directly felt. The immediate trigger for the dream was the death of another parental figure, his maternal grandfather, which, combined with Amalia's preoccupation with new babies and absence due to tuberculosis, set off the deeper fear that he might lose her forever.

This long-lasting connection between Freud's mother and the theme of death was again illustrated in a dream from his adult years, reported in *Interpretation of Dreams,* in which he found himself in a kitchen in search of food. This led to associations of "the three Fates who spin the destiny of man, and I knew that one of the three women—the inn-hostess in the dream—was the mother who gives life, and furthermore—as in my own case—gives the living creature its first nourishment. Love and hunger, I reflected, meet at a woman's breast."

This stimulated a childhood memory:

> When I was six years old and was given my first lessons by my mother, I was expected to believe that we were all made of earth and must therefore return to earth. This did not suit me and I expressed doubts of the doctrine. My mother thereupon rubbed the palms of her hands together—just as she did in making dumplings, except that there was no dough between them—and showed me the blackish scales of *epidermis* produced by the friction as a proof that we were made of earth. My astonishment at this ocular demonstration knew no bounds and I acquiesced in the belief which I was later to hear expressed in the words: "Thou owest Nature a death."

The death of his baby brother Julius, and the loss of his mother's attention and care, were the sources of the infant Freud's own anxiety and grief. However, as an adult, he was never able to sort out these experiences or relate them to his own fear and unhappiness. He was able to reconstruct his feelings of guilt in relation to the death of Julius because, like almost every young child who is replaced by a new infant, he had wished to get rid of his rival, and it was this guilt that he emphasized in his later accounts of these events. In the midst of his self-analysis he wrote to Fliess: "I greeted my one-year-younger brother, who died after a few months, with adverse wishes and genuine childhood jealousy; and . . . his death left the germ of self-reproaches in me."

But he was never able to see his own reactions to the loss of Amalia to new babies, the sense that she had betrayed him, and the yearning for her love. He clearly felt these things as a young child and, in his later writings, could describe them, but he always attributed the reactions to others—never himself. Even at the age of seventy-five, in his essay *Femininity,* he wrote:

> The turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. A hate of that kind may become very striking and last all through life. The reproach against the mother which goes back furthest is that she gave the child too little milk—which is construed against her as lack of love. The next accusation against the child's mother flares up when the next baby appears in the nursery. If possible the connection with oral frustration is preserved: the mother could not or would not give the child any more milk because she needed the nourishment for the new arrival. In cases in which the two children are so close in age that lactation is prejudiced by the second pregnancy, this reproach acquires a real basis, and it is a remarkable fact that a child, even with an age difference of only 11 months, is not too young to take notice of what

> is happening. But what the child grudges the unwanted intruder and rival is not only the suckling but all the other signs of maternal care. It feels that it has been dethroned, despoiled, damaged in its rights; it casts a jealous hatred upon the new baby and develops a grievance against the faithless mother. . . . we rarely form a correct idea of the strength of these jealous impulses, of the tenacity with which they persist, and of the magnitude of their influence upon later development. Especially as this jealousy is constantly receiving fresh nourishment in the later years of childhood and the whole shock is repeated with the birth of each new brother or sister.

This passage captured the powerful emotions Freud still felt over seventy years later in regard to his mother and the many later babies that displaced him. Amalia gave birth to Julius when Sigi was eleven months old; significantly, this was exactly the age he chose in his example. And the new arrival did deprive him of her milk and "all the other signs of maternal care." And Julius was followed by six more babies before he reached the age of ten, repeating the "whole shock" and reinforcing the sense of being "dethroned, despoiled" and "damaged." This passage gave an accurate account of Freud's early experience of his mother, including his anger at her and the babies who displaced him. But he did not connect any of this to himself, or even to male babies as a group; in his essay *Femininity,* only little girls were presumed to have such feelings.

Following the death of Julius, Amalia became pregnant again, giving birth to a daughter, Anna, when Freud was two and a half. While his wish to get rid of Julius was a reconstruction that he later made—he had no direct memory of it—he did recall his dislike of this sister, which persisted throughout his life. Anna was followed by four more sisters, two of whom, Rosa and Adolfine, he was rather fond of; the final sibling, Alexander, was born when he was ten. It was a repetitive pattern: throughout his childhood, his mother was pregnant and he was constantly losing her to new babies. The combination of his mother's grief, following the deaths of her brother and second son, and her seemingly endless pregnancies and the demands of new infants, meant that the young Freud had very little of her time, attention, and care. But it was not only his mother's ministrations that he lost in these first years; the trauma was compounded by further losses, including that of an important substitute mother.

Freud was cared for during his first two-and-a-half years by a nursemaid, a Czech Catholic woman—scholars disagree about whether her name was Monika Zajic or Resi Willek—who told him pious stories, took him to church, and shaped his early education and sense of himself. While he later described her with the words he heard from his mother—"elderly, ugly and clever"—his own memories, unearthed in the self-analysis, struck a different note. In the midst of his recollection of scenes from the Freiberg years, he wrote to Fliess that his nursemaid "told me a great deal about God Almighty and hell and . . . instilled in me a high opinion of my own capacities." She was a vital maternal figure who supported his early sense of importance and precocious intelligence. His mother later told him that he would come home from the Catholic church with his nursemaid and tell the family "how God carried on." The bright little boy thought the priest was God, and the Catholic rituals made a vivid impression on him. His memory of the nursemaid, as reported to Fliess, was most significant: "I shall be grateful to the memory of the old woman who provided me at such an early age with the means for living and going on living. As you see, the old liking is breaking through again today."

This memory, from the time when death and death fears permeated the family, shows the nursemaid's importance in sustaining his will to live and also demonstrates his direct affection for her, a feeling that came back to him almost forty years later. This kind of open love—"the old liking is breaking through again today"—was almost never voiced in relation to Amalia. And then he lost the nursemaid, too. She was caught stealing by his half brother Philipp, arrested for petty theft, and sent to prison. He never saw her again.

That the young Freud blended together the traumatic losses of both his mother and nursemaid is evident in an important memory that he unearthed during his self-analysis. He recalled a scene in which "my mother was nowhere to be found; I was crying in despair." His older half brother Philipp "unlocked a closet (*Kasten*) for me, and when I did not find my mother inside it either, I cried even more until, slender and beautiful, she came in through the door." Puzzling through this memory, he hit upon a solution: "When I missed my mother, I was afraid she had vanished from me, just as the old woman had a short time before. So I must have heard that the old woman had been locked up and therefore must have believed that my mother had been locked up too—or rather, had been 'boxed up': *eingekastelt*."

This memory turns on the double meaning of the German word *Kasten*—box or closet—also used colloquially for jail, as in "put in the box." The very young Freud took his brother's words that the nursemaid had been put in a *Kasten* concretely, as children are wont to do, and, in his despair, hoped to find her—and the mother that he had also lost—in the closet. The disturbing power of both losses is seen in his crying and the persistence of the memory over the years. The *Kasten* vignette also shows one way that Freud adapted to his losses; he remembered his mother in ideal terms—"slender and beautiful," not pregnant as she in fact was for most of his childhood—while he referred to the nursemaid—a woman of around forty—as "old" and associated her with stealing and guilt. In fact, the words he used to characterize her—"elderly, ugly and clever"—make her sound like a witch in a fairy tale.

Freud was two and a half when his nursemaid suddenly vanished from his life; this was also the time when he lost his mother to another baby, his sister Anna. Current understanding of the psychological capacities of children this age makes clear that he would have been little able to understand these events, and even less able to deal with them effectively. They were traumas that overwhelmed the capacities of the young boy. Following soon after these losses, Jacob Freud's business collapsed. Earlier accounts attributed the business failure to an economic crisis that swept the Moravian textile industry in the 1850s and to anti-Semitism, but more recent research has revealed that there is no foundation to these explanations; the local economy was, in fact, booming, and there was no more prejudice against Jews than there had been in previous years. Jacob's compatriot Ignaz Fluss, who was also a wool merchant, became the successful owner of a textile mill in Freiberg at this time. Clearly, the business failure was a result of Jacob's own incompetence, an explanation supported by his later work history; he was never again successful in business, never able to earn much of a living.

The collapse of Jacob's business forced the family to leave Freiberg; Freud, in a rare later reference to this time, described it as the "original catastrophe that involved my whole existence." The departure broke up the close-knit, extended family that had provided Sigmund with what security he enjoyed during his first three years. His adult half brothers Emanuel and Philipp, Emanuel's wife Marie, his playmate and best friend John, and John's sister Pauline, all vanished from his life. Emanuel and his family, along with Philipp, moved to England, where they pursued their trade in Manchester, the great textile center. Children without reliable maternal attachments typically gain security from other relationships and their familiar surroundings; losing the other members of the extended family, his playmates, and his home added weight to the traumas he had already suffered. Jacob, Amalia, Sigmund, and baby Anna left Freiberg for Leipzig, Germany, where they remained for about a year, but Jacob was not able to establish his business there and they were forced to move again, this time to Vienna, where Amalia's family lived, and there they settled permanently.

Upon their departure from Freiberg, when Freud was three and a half, his fear of train travel made its first appearance. At the railway station, the gas jets used for illumination made him think of "souls burning in hell," an association with his lost nursemaid, who had told him "a great deal about God almighty and hell." Interestingly, the little boy was not frightened by the other strange things he encountered at the station, including the large steam locomotive, which might have seemed overpowering to a small child. His phobia was quite specific; he was afraid that the train would leave without him, that he would be left behind, that he would lose his mother and father, just as he had lost his nursemaid a year before. This travel fear would reverberate throughout his life and reach phobic dimensions during the time of his self-analysis; as he wrote to Fliess, "You yourself have seen my travel anxiety at its height." As in his infancy, his fear was that the train would leave without him: as an adult, he was always anxious to get to the railway station well ahead of time. The travel phobia persisted for many years, as illustrated by his difficulty visiting Rome. For years he longed to see the Italian capital, yet kept inventing obstacles that interfered with the trip. Similarly, his famous voyage to the United States in 1909 was accompanied by a fainting incident just before departure, as well as a number of other anxiety symptoms—stomachaches, diarrhea—that he complained about for years afterward.

The traumatic experiences of Freud's first four years vanished from his awareness. In contemporary terms, the events and images were stored as physical and emotional sensations, but the memories were not available to consciousness; they were dissociated, not integrated into a coherent sense of self. They existed in a separate compartment of his personality, protecting him from their disruptive effects. When he did look back on his early years, he cast them in pleasant imagery, smoothing out and reconfiguring the traumatic events of his infancy. He remembered Freiberg, the scene of his early fear and misery, in ideal terms, as he did his mother; Vienna, where the family eventually fared better, was the object of both love and hate. His nursemaid, who he only referred to in the Fliess letters, was recalled with a mixture of love and distaste. The dissociation of his traumatic losses was supported by a happy fantasy of Freiberg; the negative emotions came out elsewhere. For the rest of his life he would find a variety of targets for his fears, unhappiness, disappointments, and hatreds.

By the age of three, Freud had lost his two most important caretakers—his mother and his nursemaid—the first in an atmosphere of illness, death, and grief, and the second in one of crime and guilt. His lifelong preoccupation with illness and death—both his own and of others close to him—had its origin here. Then the collapse of his father's business dispersed the extended family, causing the loss of his "uncles" and "aunt," his playmates, and the only home he knew. Jacob, Amalia, and their two infants were forced to move twice; these were years of financial insecurity and the births of five more children. If the three-year-old Freud felt deprived and frightened, so did his parents as they faced poverty and an uncertain future. It is unlikely that they would have been able to give him reassurance and emotional support when they were overcome with their own troubles.

As a very young child, Freud could do nothing about the painful realities that engulfed him; he almost certainly felt frightened, helpless, shunted aside, and overcome with longing for love and care. As Charlotte Brontë put it in her novel *Jane Eyre,* he experienced "such dread as children only can feel." There was no one to comfort or understand him. The adults controlled everything: they were present or absent, Philipp had his nursemaid sent away, the extended family members disappeared, his father lost his business and was likely preoccupied—if not despairing—over their plight. Although Jacob later appears as a kindly and well-meaning, if somewhat hapless, father, he was certainly not able to protect his son during these early years.

This account of Freud's life, emphasizing the traumatic losses and disruptions he suffered as a little boy, has been drawn from all the available biographical and historical evidence. His own version of his childhood makes reference to some of these events but, ultimately, gave major weight to his sexual desire for his mother and fear of his rival-father as the most important sources of his conflicts and fears. Years later, in his self-analysis, Freud remembered some of the events of the Freiberg period: the birth and death of Julius, his play with John and Pauline, his love for his old nursemaid and her disappearance. Reexperiencing his losses set off potentially overwhelming anxiety and sadness, feelings that he was not able to tolerate or contain on his own, and he turned away from them to what seemed like a great discovery. He wrote to Fliess:

> A single idea of general value dawned on me. I have found, in my own case too, the phenomena of being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood. . . . Later between two and two and a half years—my libido toward *matrem* was awakened, namely, on the occasion of a journey with her from Leipzig to Vienna, during which we must have spent the night together and there must have been an opportunity of seeing her *nudam*. . . . You yourself have seen my travel anxiety at its height.

In these passages, Freud asserted that seeing his mother naked was the primary source of his travel phobia and other manifestations of anxiety. (Interestingly, he misremembered his age, his first train journey having occurred at age three and a half, not two and a half, though the earlier time was when he lost the nursemaid.) According to this explanation, fear was aroused because his sexual wishes for his mother brought him into conflict with his powerful father. These ideas, of course, were elaborated over the years into his theory of the Oedipus complex and used to explain Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* as early as the Fliess letters, as well as his own troubling emotional states. Eventually, this interpretation became the centerpiece of the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis, a theory which located the boy's anxiety in fear of castration at the hands of the father as punishment for his sexual desire for the mother. The details of the discovery of the Oedipus complex—or, more accurately, its invention—in the self-analysis are critical given the great importance Freud gave to it.

The contrast between Freud's memories of his nursemaid—or his anxiety dream about his mother's death from age eight or nine—and his "memory" of his oedipal feelings is significant. In the first, he felt "the old liking" for the nursemaid and, in the *Kasten* incident, directly recalled his crying and despair. The same was true of the terrifying nightmare of his mother's death. In the case of the "memory" of his oedipal arousal, the distancing Latinisms—libido, *matrem, nudam*—were employed, and he guessed "we must have spent the night together and there must have been an opportunity of seeing her *nudam*." In other words, he had no direct image or feeling for this oedipal event; it was a reconstruction, an invention.

Freud spent his first three and a half years in the one-room apartment in Freiberg, and most of his subsequent childhood in small quarters in the Jewish ghetto of Vienna. The precocious little boy witnessed many distressing events, including the births and nursing of the seven babies born in his first ten years, deaths, illnesses, and his parents' reactions to their poverty and business failures. Exposure to all this was no doubt far more disturbing than seeing his mother unclothed. In other words, Freud created his oedipal theory because his traumatic losses aroused overwhelming emotions that were impossible to manage alone, in a *self*-analysis. By turning to the oedipal story, he created a comforting myth, one which allowed him to think that what most disturbed him was his adultlike sexual desire for his mother, and also promoted his weak father to a position of kingly power.

The distorting effects of Freud's substitution of the less threatening oedipal explanation was paralleled by his reworking of other childhood events. In the essay *Femininity,* for example, he stated that it is only the little girl who feels "dethroned, despoiled, damaged [and who] casts jealous hatred upon the new baby and develops a grievance against the faithless mother." He continued, "A mother is only brought unlimited satisfaction by her relation to a son; this is altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships." This expressed his wishful fantasy—but certainly not the reality—of his early years. A related distortion appeared in his interpretation of the nightmare from age eight or nine. After describing his terror and sobbing over the sight of his dead mother, he constructed a complicated and strained interpretation in which the dream was supposed to be driven by his sexual desires: "I was not anxious because I had dreamt that my mother was dying; but I interpreted the dream in that sense in my preconscious revision of it because I was already under the influence of the anxiety. The anxiety can be traced back, when repression is taken into account, to an obscure and evidently sexual craving that had found expression in the visual content of the dream."

Rivalrous feelings between a boy and his father are central to Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, and he convinced himself that this aggressive conflict was the origin of his own symptoms. In reality, there were many rivals for his mother's love, though it is not likely that Jacob, who was probably away from home on business trips for long periods, was a significant one in this early period; two-year-olds don't have oedipal fantasies, nor was his father connected to the very painful loss of the nurse. There were no direct memories of such rivalry and fear between the young Sigmund and his father, nor did they appear in later writings about himself, though he saw such conflicts everywhere else: in his patients, his disciples, characters in literature—indeed, in almost everyone.

What is apparent in the emotion-laden memories from the self-analysis—in contrast to theory-based reconstructions—is how the anger and rivalry aroused in the young Freud by the birth of Julius was retrospectively described as the source of his guilt feelings after the baby died. In addition, in his own recollections he did not locate rivalry and guilt in relation to his father but, rather, in his competitive play with his nephew John, who he described as the first of many ambivalent figures in his life. As he put it in 1925: "An intimate friend and a hated enemy have always been indispensable to my emotional life; I have always been able to create them anew, and not infrequently my childish ideal [his nephew John] has been so closely approached that friend and enemy have coincided in the same person; but not simultaneously, of course, as was the case in my early childhood."

Speaking of John and the death of Julius he said, "This nephew and this younger brother have determined, then, what is neurotic, but also what is intense in all my friendships." Freud's attribution of guilt feelings following the death of Julius was not in keeping with the psychology of a two-year-old. The same is true with regard to his rivalrous play with his one year older nephew. Freud described the "misdeeds" he and John committed and their "cruel" behavior towards his niece—John's sister—Pauline, which he framed in sexual terms, imagining himself and John attempting to rape or "deflower" the little girl. Once again, this does not fit with the capacities of a two-year-old. The little boys no doubt misbehaved and treated Pauline roughly, but it is unlikely that their actions, or his aggressive play with John, were the basis for a lifelong pattern of love and hate in intimate relationships. Children that age don't have rape fantasies that they feel guilty about years later, nor is it likely that his aggressive-competitive play with John could have had the long-lasting effects that he attributed to it.

The powerful and lasting ambivalence that Freud described—his need for "an intimate friend and a hated enemy"—must be based on a firmer foundation than this innocuous sibling play and fighting. Knowing what transpired with his mother at this time, it seems likely that the "memories" of his feelings about Julius, John, and Pauline symbolized the more threatening reactions of love and hate he felt toward Amalia, reactions which continued throughout his childhood. The loss of her to new babies, her later absences due to illness, and his frustrated longing for her care continued for many years. The emotional reactions that remained with him after the births of Julius and Anna were reinforced by the arrivals of the next five infants. These losses and frustrations, repeated over and over, were a much firmer basis for the lifelong pattern of ambivalence than the reactions to the playmates of his infancy, a picture that he reconstructed in his forties. But while he felt love and hate toward his mother, his desperate need for her made it impossible to consciously acknowledge these feelings. To the end of his long life he remained unaware of the full range of his feelings for Amalia.

There is a common thread running through all Freud's reconstructions of his infancy. He continually pictured himself as more able, more competent, more powerful than he could have been at the ages described. He emphasized his competitiveness, his rivalry, his anger, and the guilt occasioned by his death wishes. While these are certainly observable reactions in young children, they are found at later ages than those Freud sets forth. An infant under two, exposed to the death of a baby and his parents' grief, would feel frightened, bewildered, lost, and helpless. As additional losses occurred—as they did—the anxiety would be reinforced: who will disappear/die next? His mother? Himself? In fact, anxiety about her death, and his own, continued well into his adult years. The psychoanalyst-scholar Seigfried Bernfeld has done a careful analysis and noted: "In the self-confessions scattered throughout his writings, Freud figures at times as a villain, a parricide, ambitious, petty, revengeful, but never as a lover—save for a few very superficial allusions to his wife."

While the infant Freud's anger was part of his reaction to the early traumatic events, his stress on it, and the corresponding neglect of his fear and helplessness, was a way of protecting himself against these more overwhelming emotions. His reconstruction of his early years created a picture in which he had greater control, was not the helpless little infant he in fact was. Little boys certainly have rivalrous feelings toward their fathers, and two-year-olds commonly feel angry and competitive with new babies, and even wish them dead—within their limited understanding of death—but such competitive feelings are not necessarily a source of serious conflict. But it was safer for the adult Freud to focus on them than on his terror and helplessness. The interpretation he created to explain his own childhood became the prototype for his understanding of everyone, a foundation that he relied on throughout his life.