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Modernist Autobiography, Hysterical Narrative, and the Unnavigable River: The Case of Freud and H.D.

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The Freudian case history, which reads the history of the self as the history of a psyche, offers a useful model of autobiographical narrative. This essay examines Freud's famous case history of "Dora" as a context for H.D.'s memoir *Tribute to Freud*. Freud's portrait in *Dora* of what scholars now call "hysterical narrative" has attracted long-lasting critical attention even as the genre has expanded beyond its original association, the halting reports given by patients with hysteria. By pulling this concept back to its historic construction in an important source text, *Dora*, I hope to demonstrate that it made available a productive model for Modernist autobiography, in particular H.D.'s memoir of a critical time in her artistic formation.

Elaine Showalter, in her influential study "On Hysterical Narrative," points out that Freud drew upon earlier negative links between hysteria and narrative but that use of the term has, since Freud, spread to encompass all manner of writing by or about women.¹ Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous celebrated the hysteric's tics and silences as a radical gesture, a feminine language outside patriarchy, and an array of feminist critics, led by Mary Jacobus, began associating women's words (and reading) more generally with hysterical narrative.² Claire Kahane, another major critical voice on "hysterical narrative," extends the quality of hysterical narrative to male authors but still associates it with women, as she theorizes it to be an anxious response to the rise of the vocal New Woman.³ Showalter argues that overuse of this concept unhelpfully diminishes a "vast medical literature" to a few canonical case studies and conflates characters who are explicitly identified as hysterics (such as Lucy in *Villette*) with women who are "merely

unhappy, histrionic, or rebellious." Furthermore, she points out, we should not unthinkingly equate hysteria with women, overlooking the literature on male hysteria; for example, female hysterics' stories work through a power imbalance that does not close down male hysterics' more open-ended stories.⁴ She closes by warning readers that "to label women's writing as 'hysterical' is to denigrate it as art," regardless of one's theoretical groundwork.⁵

Although Showalter decries how far hysterical narrative has traveled from its origins, we may return to *Dora*, where many critics first encounter the concept of hysterical narrative, to see both why this text is so influential and why its later readers remain so stubbornly focused on hysterical narrative as a woman's resistant stream of words. In *Dora*, Freud offers a powerful metaphor for hysterical narrative: he tells us that Dora's narrative, which stands in for her hysterical consciousness, is an "unnavigable river" that must be cleared before it can be traced through to its source.⁶ The case as a whole theorizes her narrative, and by extension all narratives generated by hysterics, as based on an autobiographical journey, formally vexed, and generated through a gendered, contestatory relationship, where the auditor (here, the male analyst) must push through and clear the resisting voice of the speaker (Dora), and neither contributor can transcend this stormy but productive partnership.⁷

This construct revises the model of the late-eighteenth-century "nervous body" described by Peter Logan, the body with an unstable but ever-streaming flow of words, which (he argues) finds its anxious volubility echoed in many Georgian texts.⁸ Freud's model, which focuses more on resistance, friction, and a clotted flow, similarly shares significant characteristics with many Modernist narratives, often also autobiographically based and formally vexed or 'resistant.'

One Modernist writer, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), explicitly signals her interest in and discomfort with Freud's model. Her memoir *Tribute to Freud*, which recalls H.D.'s analysis with Freud in the 1930s, is indeed both a tribute to Freud and a contestation of his authority.⁹ Here H.D. lauds Freud's model of psychoanalytic narrative, borrowing the metaphor of the unnavigable river that he used in *Dora* and also in her own analysis; but she qualifies her support by setting the river trope in contrast to other metaphors (oil, spear) he used in H.D.'s analysis. While expanding on and returning to the river metaphor, she critiques the oil and spear metaphors as gendering, differentiating elements of his theory; she refuses, in other words, his teleological push toward clarity and a smoothly purposeful narrative current.

Of these three metaphors (river, oil, spear) that H.D. emphasizes in quoting Freud, two crucially describe analysis and writing— “I struck oil” and the “unnavigable river.” Her use of these metaphors signals a debt to the Freudian model of narrative that H.D.’s Modernist autobiography can neither fully embrace nor entirely transcend. Her productive ambivalence in fact echoes that of Freud; although he disdains his patients’ originary narratives as “hysterical,” his own text and his model of autobiography derive much of their narrative energy from the generative contentiousness that grounds them. This friction sparks creative energy not only for Freud’s work but also for Modernist writers like H.D., for whom Freud proved a powerful, if sometimes frustrating, precursor.

The modern medical case history has always acted as a kind of biography of the patient; behind it, however, stands a kind of shadow autobiography of the medical practitioner, who narrates his thoughts and actions vis-à-vis the patient. The rise of clinical ideals of observation in the mid-nineteenth century reduced the physician’s presence as a character in the case history, but those words and actions of the practitioner that remain in the medical narrative take on added importance as the patient’s self-narrated history recedes.¹⁰ Janis Caldwell has observed that the dialectic between physicians and patients continues through the early nineteenth century; she argues that the role of the patient’s narrative survives even later, in the “history” portion of the modern “history and physical.”¹¹ The practitioner’s narrative must take its departure from the patient’s narrative, which is nonetheless devalued, entered into the record under suspicion if at all, by the end of the century.

This symbiotic arrangement of narratives results in a text ostensibly focused on the patient but acknowledging only the practitioner’s authority. These tensions become acute in Freud’s development of the case history, for Freud quite openly turns the patient’s history into his own.¹² Writing in a clinical era that had come to distrust any hint of personal bias in medical reports, and working doggedly to establish his own new science, he treads close to the edges of professionalism when he tells his own story by grafting it onto someone else’s.¹³ In particular, Freud foregrounds a narrator (himself) and his efforts to uncover a series of secrets, typically sexual, nested in the past of the hysteric under analysis. Most important, the story Freud tells about himself is the story of how he came to write the case history and the story of how he thinks it should be read. In other words, Freud’s case histories talk about what it is like to write a story; they are centrally

concerned with the process of narrative, in particular autobiographical narrative, which they code in a figure evocative of the stream of consciousness: a troubled river. My interest in Freud, then, centers on how he generates and authorizes his narrative of the self.

Dora and the Strains of Dual Authorship

The case of *Dora* is a classic of psychoanalysis, offering reason, interpretation, leaps of intuition, sexual tension, and a pulsing drama of resistance between patient and analyst. Freud declares himself a champion of scientific language and procedure and expresses himself ready for outraged resistance from his readers, then oscillates between matter specific to *Dora's* evolving analysis and anxious commentary about how his work should be understood. We learn that *Dora*, a neurotic eighteen-year-old girl, has been "handed over to" Freud by her father for treatment (*D*, 12–13). *Dora* presents with headaches, coughing, and loss of voice, progressing to fever, loss of consciousness, amnesia, gastric pains, and aphonia. Freud reflects that here he should be able to discern the three elements of hysteria: "a psychic trauma, a conflict of affects, and . . . a disturbance in the sphere of sexuality"; these psychic disturbances were thought to trigger the hysteric's physical symptoms by a process of analogy and contiguity (*D*, 18).¹⁴ By urging *Dora* to talk through her memories and denials, Freud unravels a vertiginous series of layers of prior causes: her disgust when a family friend, Herr K., kisses her; her desire for Herr K.; her realization that Frau K. is her father's mistress and that her governess also loves him; *Dora's* desire for Herr K.; her awareness of her father's impotence; her desire for her father; and her (most deeply buried) desire for Frau K. After this dizzying series of conclusions, involving virtually every character in the narrative, Freud performs two extended dream analyses, remarkable for their wordplay and intuitive reasoning process and, as before, interpreting *Dora's* denials by the dictum "'No' signifies . . . 'Yes'" (*D*, 51). However, *Dora* calmly announces to him at this point that she has determined to break off the analysis. Freud laments, "Her breaking off so unexpectedly, just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their highest, and her thus bringing those hopes to nothing—this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part" (*D*, 100). It is fitting that *Dora's* story, punctuated so frequently by her denials that Freud refuses to accept, should conclude with her own refusal to continue. Sometimes "no" really does mean "no."

Freud here entwines a number of stories: the progress of this young woman's mysterious ailments; her knotted love and fear of family members and friends; how that love and fear became occulted and produce neurosis and her physical symptoms; how psychoanalytic treatment unravels her story; Dora's abrupt departure before her case can be entirely resolved; and Freud's own clever, forceful persona in pressing forward the whole unruly, complex process toward an orderly and coherent narrative.

In *Dora*, Freud develops a powerful theoretical model that can organize and contain his narrative ideologically. His model of psychoanalytic narrative posits, first, that the case history emerges out of autobiography; it not only is interested in the patient's life experiences but it accrues richness and authority the more closely it can be aligned with a detailed report of those experiences.

Second, Freud argues that the psychoanalytic case history should be produced through a collaboration where the patient offers "hysterical" narrative in a formally confused and irregular state that is then "cured" (made smooth and legible) by the interpolation of the analyst's rational interpretive discourse.¹⁵ Sander Gilman contends that Freud intervenes for the hysteric in a medical tradition that suspected her to be "degenerate."¹⁶ But Freud merely shifts the stigma of degeneration (that is, inherent inadequacy) to her story; he replaces suspicion of the hysteric herself with a sure condemnation of her story. He explains that his patients are "incapable" of giving "smooth and exact . . . reports":

[T]heir communications run dry, leaving gaps unfilled, and riddles unanswered . . . [or they are] totally obscure and unilluminated by even a single piece of serviceable information. The connections . . . are for the most part incoherent, and the sequence of different events is uncertain. Even during the course of their story patients will repeatedly correct a particular or a date, and then perhaps, after wavering for some time, return to their first version. . . . It is only towards the end of the treatment that we have before us an intelligible, consistent, and unbroken case history. (*D*, 10–11)

Normative narrative, then, is "intelligible, consistent, and unbroken," flowing smoothly from past to present. In fact, Freud tells us that he correctly diagnosed one patient as suffering from untreated syphilis rather than hysteria, precisely because her narrative "came out perfectly clearly and connectedly" (*D*, 10, fn 3). In contrast, Freud attributes the hysteric's "bad storytelling" to her illness. He calls it

"characteristic of the neurosis," "a necessary correlate of the symptoms and one which is theoretically requisite" (*D*, 11). If a smooth narrative represents the cure, a dry, rough, or winding one becomes for Freud the sign of illness.

Thus, the hysteric's story needs first to be cajoled out of her through association and questioning (and in Freud's early work, hypnosis and the pressure technique), and then "disciplined" by being edited and annotated. Freud sees this discipline as a scientific one: he insistently makes reference to this via his "duties toward science," the "purely scientific and technical" context of his work, his scientific "frankness," and his struggle against "the limitations imposed by medical discretion and unfavourable circumstances" (*D*, 2-3).

While it is assumed that Dora needs Freud to cure her hysteria, Freud admits that he also needs her, or patients like her, to provide data for his theories. Most nineteenth-century medical writing barely acknowledges the collaboration between doctor and patient that produces the medical case history, but Freud makes their mutual reliance explicit.¹⁷ Compared to the physical medicine of the nineteenth century, where the patient is more passive, Freud must rely on the patient's production and dissemination of memory, which provides his raw materials. Without them he cannot produce the case history. If, as Robert Hemmings has argued, the case history acts as a "sur-narrative,"¹⁸ then the power of the psychoanalytic text relies on a dual production of narrative: the patient's narrative and the doctor's version of that narrative. The female patient, though her text is portrayed as garbled, thus could arguably be most important in this productive relation, given her role as "originator" of the text.

If the clinical practice of Freud's early psychoanalysis arguably rests on a contested collaboration between doctor and patient, the narrative produced by that collaboration—the case history—records the strains of their relationship. For instance, commentators on Freud's work have examined his shifting use of direct quotation. Carol Berkenkotter argues that Freud privileges direct quotations of Dora's speech only in certain sections of the case history.¹⁹ She discusses what she calls "Freud's experimental uses of direct and indirect quotations, monologue, and dialogue to capture his patients' utterances and the interactions between analyst and patient" as a means of "bringing before the eye" the vital scenes, producing a verisimilitude that will compel belief in his readers. She sees this as "foregrounding techniques Freud uses to create "presence," or . . . *enargeia* ('bringing before the eyes'). . . . [H]is narrative gains in verisimilitude and, as a result, in epistemic

power.”²⁰ Daniel Lehman, however, notes that Freud quotes directly only those of Dora’s statements that confirm his theories, and that often even those sound like Freud’s own voice. Regardless of his aim, Freud often reworks or frames Dora’s words so as to privilege his own language above hers, although her narrative supposedly grounds and drives the case. Her abrupt departure from treatment reminds him, however, that not only their narrative but the practice and the treatment also are dually produced, requiring active participation from both hysteric and analyst.

But the Freudian case history does not document the collaboration of equals or of an author and editor, as it might seem. Rather, it assumes hierarchy and opposition or “resistance” between patient and physician: thus not only a dual but also a dueling production of narrative. This, the third important aspect of Freud’s model, defines the hysterical narrative as generated, authorized, and transmitted through conflict. It is the hysteric’s “resistance” to Freud’s intervention that impedes the free flow of her narrative, causing her to forget, displace, invert, or otherwise manipulate the elements of her story.²¹ Dora’s resistance makes this text a battleground, resounding with the volleys of an opposition Freud expects as necessary but refuses to take seriously. He calls her denials “a confirmation from the unconscious. . . . No other kind of ‘Yes’ can be extracted from the unconscious; there is no such thing at all as an unconscious ‘No.’. . . in such a case ‘No’ signifies the desired ‘Yes’” (*D*, 50–52). Freud’s reputation as combative and authoritarian rests in part on his determination to “overcome . . . compel and subdue” his patient’s resistance.²² The resistance of this hysterical patient comes to a head with her famous “revenge” upon men: breaking off her psychoanalytic treatment. Freud’s frustration at her untimely departure is evident when he comments, “I promised to forgive her for having deprived me of the satisfaction of affording her a far more radical cure for her troubles” (*D*, 112). I propose that by making resistance another necessary element of hysteria—by hypothesizing that it is impossible for the hysteric to disagree with him but necessary that she try—Freud deflects her criticism (and his failure) as a necessary symptom of her illness. Thus while he disallows any real challenge to his authority, he also ensures that his case history is generated in an atmosphere of conflict that is as essential to it as collaboration.

In addition, given that two of Freud’s favored terms for his own role were “man of science” or “medical man,” the hysterical narrative, which must not only resist but also ultimately submit to his efforts,

is generally coded not only as pathological and rebellious but also as feminine (*D*, 52). Showalter and others have persuasively argued that hysteria should not be unconditionally deemed feminine; but the text and its immediate environment argue for a reading of hysteria as at least feminizing in this context, and in the long shadow of its influence. Despite Freud's early interest in male hysterics, even those essays include significant work on female patients; and hysteria's etymological and historical links to the feminine are well known.²³ Showalter and Toril Moi argue that hysteria should be understood as a reaction of the powerless, not necessarily the female or feminized; but of course in this historical context the woman is the figure who is most conventionally powerless.²⁴ Similarly, Gilman points out that, while Freud "attempted to free . . . women" from this taint by re-locating the site of hysteria from the womb to the imagination, his revision does nothing to combat the notion that the female imagination is peculiarly diseased.²⁵ Moreover, in *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud shifted definitively to a focus on female hysterics more consonant with the cultural typing of the disease, a focus that he underscores in *Dora*. Thus hysteria remains not only a gendered but a gendering discourse for Freud. He establishes the hysteric's story as not only incoherent and incomplete but also feminized and subordinate.

In the last element of Freud's theoretical model, the hysteric cannot herself transcend the knots of her narrative. In fact, Freud doesn't encourage her to try. He reads the patient's self-analysis as a way of cloaking her resistance, saying, "When the patient brings forward a sound and incontestable train of argument during psychoanalytic treatment, the physician is liable to feel a moment's embarrassment, and the patient may take advantage of it" (*D*, 28). If the mark of the hysteric is the inability to untangle her own narrative, Freud may then stamp both her narrative and himself with the masculinizing signs of scientific discourse, objective, powerful, and authoritative. Once Freud has theorized the hysteric's story as inherently inept, he has made himself necessary. The hysteric thus represents narrative authenticity, private and domestic, while the physician leans on her words to mount the seat of authority, where he edits her narrative for circulation outside the intimate circuit of analysis. In sum, Freud defines the hysterical narrative as an autobiography necessarily troubled or confused in form, requiring interpolation from the physician, and he theorizes conflict—in *Dora* made clear as a specifically gendered conflict—as both necessary and generative of the final narrative of analysis.

Freud allows the structure of individual case histories to follow the random occurrences of memory, but he also negotiates between the waywardness of the individual case and what his theoretical model tells him to expect from a hysterical narrative. He thus moves between a random dispersion of meaning and an ordered arrangement of it. Originally derived from his work with patients and elaborated in *Dora*, this theoretical model becomes the structure to which he accommodates individual case histories. It is ironic that, although Freud surely wished the progress of psychoanalysis itself to be smooth and sure, in his psychoanalytic texts he insists again and again on the conflicted nature of its practice. His determined allegiance to this model becomes especially clear when we consider that *Dora's* case fails: she leaves analysis before it is complete. Why does *Dora's* failed analysis prove such a potent model for Freud? In fact, the very elements that cause her explosive departure prove fertile for him, because in his model, conflict is both necessary and generative. Such a model, then, rewrites the narrative of *Dora's* stormy analysis and abrupt departure as a triumphant proof of Freud's theories.

Positivism and the Unnavigable River in Freud

Freud's written record of *Dora's* case, now a canonical text of psychoanalysis and literary criticism, has attracted a wealth of readings, many addressing the gender politics and unusual literary style of the text; as Showalter points out, it has spawned a entire critical industry on hysterical narrative.²⁶ If Showalter resists the broadly woman-centered trend of criticism on hysteria, I would like to offer a caveat about the hysteria-centered trend of criticism on *Dora*. Certainly the hysterical narrative is a potent and useful concept deriving from this text, earning its place as an influential genre in modern criticism and indeed as the focus of this essay. But if Freud devotes many pages to explicating the form and theory of hysterical narrative, he here also demonstrates his investment in forms of writing other than hysterical, and in the underlying philosophy shaping that writing.²⁷

That is, Freud's work in *Dora* demonstrates his reliance on core principles of positivist science as he activates them in acute tension with the hysterical elements that have attracted critical attention. Although Freud is remembered for the upheavals his theories caused in nineteenth-century culture and medicine, he was originally trained in neurophysiology. Thus it is not surprising that his revolutionary

theories of the psyche and of narrative are grounded on four positivist concepts congruent with late-nineteenth-century science: the stability of meaning, a causal logic, the certainty of present existence, and a teleology toward order.²⁸ He construes the case as a proof of his own scientific rationality and vindication of his method, which orders and “cures” the hysterical narrative. By curing the narrative, he cures the patient, and establishes psychoanalysis as a science.

Freud’s reliance on these concepts is evident in his brief “Prefatory Remarks” that frame the case. For example, although meanings may have been lost or hidden, the search for meaning remains a central impulse of Freud’s work.²⁹ He recommends the study of dream-interpretation, for instance, because dreams help him track down the meaning of hysterical or neurotic symptoms. Dream-interpretation, he says, “can become the means of filling in amnesias and elucidating symptoms” and it is “an indispensable pre-requisite for any comprehension of the mental processes in hysteria and the other psychoneuroses” (*D*, 5). In fact, *Dora* as a text was “intended to show the way in which the interpretation of dreams plays a part in the work of analysis” (*D*, 9). Although various symptoms and their meaning layer over one another, the structure is not necessarily unstable, as the process of analysis aims to reach and identify a root meaning. Indeed, the work of the analyst is interpretive overall, attempting to replace suggestions and shadows with the clear lines of diagnosis; “the physician is usually faced by the task of guessing and filling in what the analysis offers him in the shape only of hints and allusions” (*D*, 35). Although he must “guess,” his work is here portrayed as solid (“filled in”), more material than what is “only hints” in the patient’s insubstantial narrative.

Second, despite the random and contiguous logic of the hysterical narrative, Freud does not entirely abandon traditional logic: the link between meaning (the nucleus of the neurosis) and its expression (the symptom) remains causal and logical, even though the symptom itself appears irrationally or unpredictably, and the search for its cause must trace a disjunctive, multiple, and tangled path. While the chronology of the Freudian case history is typically reversed, the originary order of causality is in no way affected; the logic of causality that has traditionally driven narrative remains intact. This is evident when, for example, Freud discusses the difficulty of “tracing back every single element of a neurosis to factors with which we were already familiar” (*D*, 5). It is assumed that every element currently present in neurosis must have a cause at some point in the past, and that it is possible to “trace back” a linear chain of events from a neurotic symptom

to its originary cause in some trauma. In fact, the ostensible goal of each analysis is to unweave and reweave the hysterical narrative's contiguous logic into a sound narrative based on a traditional logic and chronology of cause and effect. This is evident in his conviction that, had Dora only persisted in analysis, "we should no doubt have obtained the fullest possible enlightenment upon every particular of the case" (*D*, 6).

Third, Freud's technique frames and contains the disruptive impulses of memory by telling the story of the past through repeated flashbacks, that is to say, grounded in a stable "present" from which the narrative is backward unreeled in fits and starts. It foregrounds a psychological "point of view," that of the memory, yet is inescapably marked by the potent and knowing editorial control of the narrator in real time. Most frequently, although not always, the rememberer is female; the editor, male. The progress of their joint narrative is marked by his "clearing" and tracing of the river of consciousness to its source. The apparently random, chaotic emergence of this jigsaw of personal history does not, for Freud, suggest any disruption or distortion of the present perspective.

The final logic that remains reliable is that of the analyst's centripetal impulse, his desire to get to the center of the hysterical patient, often a woman. The teleological dynamic of this quest-for-the-secret while plumbing the feminine unconscious reveals the drive of the Freudian case history to be analogous to his famous query, "What do women want?" These four positivist logics—the stability of meaning, a causal logic, the certainty of present existence, and a teleology toward order—undergird his account of Dora's narrative. They provide an anchor to the shifts, blockages, and ambiguities of the hysterical narrative and reveal Freud's continuing, if strained, allegiance to a narrative structure at odds with hers. It is thus not only Dora who resists Freud but Dora's narrative as well.

Freud and the Unnavigable River

Alongside this evident valorization of logical argument and objective writing, Freud the prosaic indulges his penchant for figurative language. He adopts a memorable simile to seal our understanding of psychoanalytic practice as necessarily difficult and its narratives as obstructed and unclear. This gendered conflict in Freud's narrative of hysteria, and its expression in the patient's formally troubled text,

emerges in his figure of an "unnavigable river." In order to explain, in his case history of Dora, the challenging, involuted progress of a psychoanalytic treatment, Freud likens the hysteric's occulted memories to a clogged, tortuous river. He remarks, "I begin the treatment . . . by asking the patient to give me the whole story of his life and illness, but even so the information I receive is never enough to let me see my way about the case. This first account may be compared to an unnavigable river whose stream is at one moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among shallows and sandbanks" (*D*, 10).³⁰ Freud is the hero of hopeless causes here, taking on an impossible task by setting out to trace his way along what he tells us is an "unnavigable" river.³¹ He cannot get his bearings and cannot navigate the current ("Strom").³² Interestingly, the suggestion of powerful flow is common in usages of "Strom," but here Freud clearly complains of a blockage or lack of flow: "not enough" to be useful ("nicht genügend"), the bed ("Bett") of which is at some points blocked across by masses of rocks ("bald durch Felsmassen verlegt"), at others divided by sandbanks and made shallow ("bald durch Sandbänke zerteilt und untief gemachet wird"). Although, as Mahony reminds us, Strachey translates "stream" when he should have "streambed,"³³ Freud clearly uses metonymy here to refer to the river by way of its bed: if the bed is blocked or shallow, the course of the water itself must be likewise. His emphasis on current and the obstacles to forward movement, contrasted to the "smooth and exact" ("glatten und exakten") histories he envies in the following sentence, all imply the linear nature of his desired motion. The term "Strom" also could describe a river estuary, suggesting that Freud wishes to navigate to the open sea; however, he seems to be trapped in a more enclosed location, frustrated by the blockage and confinement of the water flow, with the suggestion of looming cliffs alongside (another possible meaning of "Felsmassen"). Despite the occasional sideways (associative) movements that may be necessary at present, his ultimate task is to press forward along the course of this stream.

Overdetermined as is so much in Freud's work, this metaphor has multiple referents or tenors, including the spoken narrative, the hysteric's mind, and Freud's own narrative. The patient's account is "choked . . . divided and lost" because it represents the blockages of hysteria in the mind. The process of analysis requires that the spoken narrative, developed by association, should follow the contours of the mind; thus if the patient's thoughts are shunted and hindered by blockages and countercurrents, the patient's account of conscious-

ness becomes also an unnavigable river. And because Freud tells us many times that his case history must follow the course of analysis (clearing) along the route of the patient's broken narrative, his case history must inhabit the same currents and blockages that mark the patient's account; that is, his narrative must also trace, at least for a time, an unnavigable river.

Freud was of course not the first or only writer to conceive of the mind as a kind of river. Indeed, George Henry Lewes, an important figure in the Victorian prehistory of neuropsychology, coined the term "stream of consciousness" in his *Problems of Life and Mind* in 1879, and William James brought it into wider use beginning in 1884.³⁴ Freud speaks of mental "currents" both in this case and elsewhere,³⁵ but his river is a figure not just for consciousness but also its story. The importance of Freud's trope of currents blocked by debris signals the importance of narrative—specifically, a formally troubled narrative—to his theory of hysteria.

H.D.'s Hysterical Narrative: Canoeing the Unnavigable River

H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* offers a remarkable window into this Modernist writer's response to Freud's work, especially given H.D.'s wide range of life experience to draw upon. From her middle-class Christian background growing up in the late nineteenth century in a Moravian household in Pennsylvania, H.D. moved on to Bryn Mawr College and then to lifelong travels throughout Europe and Greece and friendships with many other major figures of Modernist culture. Her life and works are deeply engaged with both Modernist and psychoanalytic work. Named an exemplary Imagist by Ezra Pound (to whom she was briefly affianced), she lived and worked in a set of intersecting circles including D.H. Lawrence, Havelock Ellis, Mary Butts, and Dorothy Richardson, as well as Richard Aldington, Kenneth Macpherson, and Bryher (Winifred Ellerman), who were at various times part of her circle. Fighting a series of breakdowns, H.D. had worked with Mary Chadwick and Hanns Sachs and was in analysis with Freud for a total of about six months in 1933 and 1934. She had read up in Freud, whose work she knew both in English and in the original German,³⁶ at the suggestion of her longtime companion Bryher, who was deeply interested in psychoanalysis, and in preparation for her work with Freud. H.D.'s letters to Bryher show that she had become fluent in the terms and concepts of psychoanalysis, and that she was

enthusiastic, if a bit nervous, about working with “the Professor,” as she calls him.³⁷ Freud had written *Dora* three decades before H.D.’s analysis with him, but it is evident from her *Tribute* (written a decade after analysis) that his model of hysterical narrative, laid out in *Dora*, had survived the many intervening changes in his theories.

Tribute to Freud sets H.D. in Vienna in 1933–34, during her treatment with Freud. The book progresses through vignettes of treatment (the stairs to his office, the patient she meets there, the *objets d’art* in Freud’s studio, his couch and stove, her gifts to him, his dogs, and especially his words) interspersed with dreamy meditations, passionate denunciations of and defenses of the Professor, and flashbacks forward and back to other episodes and persons in H.D.’s life. In much the same way her own consciousness must have registered both present setting and past memories as she worked through the analysis with Freud.

H.D.’s prose in *Tribute to Freud* demonstrates just how useful to a Modernist aesthetic is Freud’s model of hysterical narrative. Most evident, apart from her use of the autobiographical genre of memoir, is her embrace of the formal irregularities central to Freud’s model. Her *Tribute to Freud* refuses smoothness and linearity in favor of formal experimentation such as repetition, correction, juxtaposition, and an apparent randomness that H.D. describes as “[l]et[ting] the impressions . . . make their own sequence.”³⁸ Her text thrives on a contiguous logic and other features of what Freud would identify as a hysterical text: symbolism, ambiguity, and overdetermination; interruption and disjunction; condensation and displacement; repetition, revision, and correction; an associative or contiguous rather than causal logic; and the refusal of linear chronology, with rapidly shifting, overlapping layers of memories and dreams. She drifts from discussing another patient (the “Flying Dutchman”), to the figure of Mercury, to a famous fountain in Vienna, to a dream of a young man she knows who is not named Brooks; only to conclude, “Perhaps it is not very important now. It is interesting, however, to note in retrospect how the mind hedges away” (*TF*, 8).

Indeed, movements in *Tribute* are often oblique rather than direct: the curving staircase to Freud’s rooms; the hedging, shuttling, drifting mind; the “spiral-like meanderings” of mind and body. “I knew,” she says later, “that I, like most of the people I knew . . . was drifting. We were drifting. Where? I did not know but at least I accepted the fact that we *were* drifting.”³⁹ In fact, she enters analysis in part to temporarily sidestep the “current” of history, rushing through war. One might argue that many Modernist narratives play upon an associative

structure, but H.D. attributes her methods here specifically to Freud's psychoanalytic model.

H.D. further constructs *Tribute to Freud* as a hysterical narrative in the proliferating contradictions of the text. These unexpected shifts and conflicts invite the audience to exercise an ironic eye and a hermeneutic of suspicion not unlike Freud's own. Even as she defers to Freud's knowledge and his insight, H.D. subsumes his commentary in a flood of her own repetitive, overlapping thoughts, her "tribute" to the narrative logic she borrows from Freud but which he repudiates as inferior. According to the logic of analysis, a logic H.D. clearly invokes, the reader must interpret her words by opposition, inversion, reversal. She invites this, for example, by rendering Freud's "the childhood of the individual is the childhood of the race" as "the childhood of the race is the childhood of the individual." "Whether or not, the converse is also true," she offers with this pair of bookended epigrams, and drifts onward (*TF*, 16).

Unlike Freud's ideal psychoanalytic narrative, however, H.D.'s has not been re-ordered or tidied. Indeed, she proclaims Freud's abilities and his knowledge, she sings his praises—but in her own narrative methodology she celebrates and encourages an associative illogic that draws from and sustains his model of the unnavigable river even as she opposes his ostensible goals—clarity, causality, and teleology—in mapping it. H.D.'s vexed relation to Freud's model becomes evident when she describes the couch where she reclines:

The couch was slippery, the head-piece at the end was hard. I was almost too long; if I were a little longer my feet would touch the old-fashioned porcelain stove that stood edge-wise in the corner. *The Nürnberg Stove* was a book that my mother had liked. I could not remember a single incident of the book and would not take the time to go through all the intricacies of explaining to the Professor that I was thinking of a book called *The Nürnberg Stove*. It was all very obvious; there was the stove, throwing out its pleasantly perceptible glow, there was the stove itself in the corner. I saw the porcelain stove and I thought of a book called *The Nürnberg Stove*, but why take up time going into all that, anyway? (*TF*, 23–24)

This passage ostensibly accords with Freud's technique of association, but by acknowledging the link but refusing to follow the associations from the book to the stove, H.D. subtly undermines, changes, and rejects the teleology of meaning he prizes just as he promised to sort, order, and explicate the elements of the hysteric's bad story.

H.D.'s tribute is not, then, unconditional; her ambivalent relation to Freud is in fact well-established.⁴⁰ Indeed, she warns her readers that "[t]here was an argument implicit in our very bones" on the matter of "the greater transcendental issues" (*TF*, 16). Her understanding of their relationship as contestatory is evident in her poem "The Master" (unpublished during her lifetime) where she expresses both her intense love and respect for Freud, and her anger at him. "His tyranny was absolute," she writes, "for I had to love him then."⁴¹

H.D.'s use of Freud's river metaphor demonstrates her struggle with his model. The metaphor of flowing water runs through *Tribute to Freud*, appearing not only in her fellow analysand "Brooks" and in her dreamwork of the Egyptian princess, but also in her discussions of Freud's analytic methods.⁴² While H.D. criticism discusses the trope of the river, critics have not noted that "the river" surfaces multiple times in *Tribute to Freud*, to somewhat different effect each time.

H.D.'s text returns again and again to the trope of an unnavigable (or in some instances simply inaccessible and unexplored) river. Apart from her reference to the frightening "current" of wartime history which prompts her analysis, she uses this figure of the river to refer to the unconscious and to a universal human experience more than to the patient's or analyst's narrative. She conceives of her journey of analysis as canoeing, mapping, clearing, tunneling to/through, or otherwise accessing or freeing that dark river. *Tribute to Freud*, tellingly, refuses to imitate Freud's case histories in that it does not follow the path of her analysis persistently and in fact closes with a reference to the journey as still to be undertaken; if anything, the text stubbornly adheres to the forms of untreated hysterical narrative.

Most important, H.D.'s references to the river contradict one another in their depiction of Freud, signaling the importance of this figure as a marker of her vexed relationship with him. In particular, H.D. shifts back and forth, first praising Freud as a practitioner of this trope—as one who knows the river and acknowledges it—then criticizing him for avoiding it, for preferring evaluative language to what she perceives as the universalizing discourse of the river. The hysterical tendencies in H.D.'s narrative condense around her conflicting accounts of this metaphor, which is symptomatic of the uneasy alliance between H.D. and Freud as well as the jostling for control between analyst and analysand. The river generally, for H.D., represents the natural flow of human thought and experience, and thus a positive force to be accessed, freed, and respected. She defines the river as valuable by setting it in contrast to other metaphors used by Freud during her

analysis (oil and a spear), which she rejects as banal, materialistic, and masculine elements of Freud's method. The river thus becomes both a figure for and an enactment of the contentious, and gendering, process of generating and authorizing autobiographical narrative.

H.D. introduces the trope early in *Tribute* as a powerful metaphor entirely congruent with Freud's work. She figures herself as lost on a river, in "a narrow birch-bark canoe," surrounded by "the great forest of the unknown" and making a pilgrimage to the "old Hermit who lived on the edge of this vast domain" (Freud) in hopes that he would tell her "how best to steer my course" (*TF*, 18). This early use of the river metaphor sets up a later image of an unexplored river, in this case buried underground rather than deeply enforested as in the first image. In this later instance, H.D. praises Freud explicitly for using the river trope, saying: "He had dared to say that the dream came from an unexplored depth in man's consciousness [that] ran like a great stream or ocean underground . . . today, as in Joseph's day" (*TF*, 107).⁴³ However, these first laudatory passages are countered by another, quite critical reference to Freud and the unnavigable river. In this passage H.D. criticizes Freud for avoiding such figurative language, including precisely the metaphor (clearing an unnavigable river) that he does in fact turn to in *Dora*. She makes her point by setting the river metaphor in contrast to another metaphor for the flow of thought: not water, but oil. She sets these two metaphors in opposition, championing the notion of thought as a living current, not a valuable reservoir. Specifically, she critiques Freud for choosing what she calls a "business man's" language ("I struck oil") instead of a more symbolic, ritualistic rhetoric suitable for epiphany. She says,

He was drawing from a source so deep in human consciousness that the outer rock or shale, the accumulation of hundreds or thousands of years of casual, slack or even wrong or evil thinking, had all but sealed up the original spring or well-head. He called it striking oil, but others—long ago—had dipped into that same spring. They called it 'a well of living water' in the old days, or simply the 'still waters.' The Professor spoke of this source of inspiration in terms of oil. It focused the abstraction, made it concrete, a modern business symbol. . . . He used the idiom or slang of the counting-house, of Wall Street, a business man's concrete definite image. . . . It is difficult to imagine the Professor saying solemnly, "I drew by right of inheritance from the great source of inspiration and of Israel and the Psalmist—Jeremiah, some might call me. I stumbled

on a well of living water, the river of life. It ran muddy or bright. It was blocked by fallen logs, some petrified—and an accumulation of decaying leaves and branches. I saw the course of the river and how it ran, and I, personally, cleared away a bit of rubbish, so that at least a small section of the river may run clear. There is a lot yet to be done . . . so that all men, all nations, may gather together, understanding in the end . . . ’ But no, that was not the Professor’s way of talking. (*TF*, 125; final ellipsis in original)

H.D. here chastises Freud. She criticizes not his insight, which she sees as timeless, but his style: twentieth-century “business man.”⁴⁴ This passage implicitly challenges what she depicts as a distancing, assessing strategy in Freud, which opposes the intimate, material engagement she imagines him invoking: “I, personally, cleared away a bit of rubbish.”⁴⁵ This simultaneous assertion of both Freud’s closeness and his distance threads through H.D.’s text. Sarah Jackson argues that when Freud tells H.D. “Do not touch” (his dog Yofi) on her first visit, he “simultaneously prohibit[s] touch, and offer[s] a certain tactile healing—do not hold me back. Freud’s words to H.D. are both an invitation and a warning” (*TF*, 189). The language of the unnavigable river and the actions associated with it—exploring, clearing, running—evokes a willingness to engage, a grappling with the human condition, that precludes the cold evaluative judgments that H.D. critiques.

True to the logic of the hysterical narrative, however, H.D.’s text cannot sustain this challenge to Freud’s judgment. She asserts here that it “was not the Professor’s way of talking” to compare analysis to mapping a great clotted river; that is, she says Freud did not indulge in exactly the kind of resonant metaphor and grand rhetoric that he in fact did continually fall back on, in passages like the river scene from *Dora*. Even H.D.’s language here (“blocked by fallen logs,” “an accumulation of decaying leaves,” “cleared away a bit of rubbish”) precisely echoes Freud’s references to the streambed blocked by rocks and to the task of clearing rubbish or debris from its path. In fact, H.D. knew Freud and his work too well not to recognize his penchant for precise, yet sweeping, metaphor of this sort. Only pages earlier, as we know, H.D. had applauded Freud for his use of the very trope that she criticizes him here for avoiding. The river metaphor thus drives both Freud’s figurative style and H.D.’s revision and critique of his ostensibly “objective” (that is to say, non-figurative) style. It enacts the very confusion—the narrative “rubbish”—that it describes and that it seeks to eradicate.

Why does H.D. claim that “that was not the Professor’s way of talking” when she must have known that it so manifestly was? A closer look shows that the river metaphor frames and resolves a conflict aroused by Freud’s theory of gender. When H.D. rejects Freud’s oil metaphor as “commonplace,” chiding him for abjuring the symbolic and aesthetic power of a river metaphor in favor of businessmen’s language, she echoes an earlier critique she’d made of Freud’s supposedly business-like propensities. She criticizes what she sees as crass materialism when Freud assesses his small bronze figure of Pallas Athéné:

‘She is perfect,’ he said, ‘*only she has lost her spear.*’ I did not say anything. . . . [W]hen he said, *she is perfect*, he meant not only that the little bronze statue was a perfect symbol, made in man’s image (in woman’s, as it happened) . . . he meant as well, this little piece of metal you hold in your hand (look at it) is priceless really, it is *perfect*, a prize, a find of the best period of Greek art. . . . He was speaking as an ardent lover of art and an art-collector. He was speaking in a double sense, it is true, but he was speaking of value, the actual intrinsic value of the piece; like a Jew, he was assessing its worth; the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ran in his veins. He knew his material pound, his pound of flesh, if you will, but this pound of flesh was a *pound of spirit* between us, something tangible to be weighed and measured, to be weighed in the balance and—pray God—not to be found wanting! (*TF*, 104–06)

Most obviously, H.D. relies here on Western racial and ethnic stereotypes of the Jew, in particular her insistence on what she perceives as a streak of materialism, in a manner that rubs against the grain of her depictions elsewhere.⁴⁶ More important for my purposes, this passage also foregrounds H.D.’s differences with Freud on the matter of gender. Her criticisms of the Professor leverage her role as hysteric, the site of resistance, to denounce the gender hierarchy that structures Freud’s case history and, she implies, his identity as *homo economicus*.

And significantly, this passage immediately precedes the passage where H.D. praises Freud for using the language of rivers (“He had said, he had dared to say . . . ,” *TF*, 107). In context, then, this praise of Freud’s river metaphor reverses their roles: she implicitly corrects his course, toward the meaningful, universalizing language of human consciousness and connection (the river), and away from the crass “business man’s” language (the spear) that emphasizes material value and gender difference.

It is evident that H.D. experienced the contest between her and Freud as a gendered one. When Freud assesses his statue of Pallas Athené with the portentous words, "She is perfect . . . *only she has lost her spear*," H.D. counters his evaluation with a prayer that she herself may "not . . . be found wanting" (*TF*, 69, 70). Feminist critics have read this response as a refusal of Freud's theory of feminine insufficiency and penis envy, although H.D., in a letter to Bryher, expresses a positive excitement over this theory.⁴⁷ Regardless, it is clear that the river unifies and enlivens; the spear differentiates and genders.

Overall, then, H.D. accepts Freud's central metaphor for analysis (the river) while pairing it with alternate metaphors (oil, the spear) that allow her explicitly to reject the patriarchal model that governs his analysis. In H.D.'s shuttling between praise and blame of Freud, she attempts to assert herself against the authoritative patriarchy of his model while still acknowledging and praising what she saw as Freud's access to knowledge of a universal human condition. The text is riven by this ambivalent reading of Freud's model. For example, in another use of the river metaphor, H.D. contends that the patient, whom she terms the "protagonist," "must clear away his own rubbish, before his particular stream, his personal life, could run clear of obstruction into the great river of humanity, hence to the sea of super-human perfection, the 'Absolute,' as Socrates or Plato called it" (*TF*, 127–28). Here H.D. has revised Freud's model, where the physician is the active clearer, the patient the passive accumulation of "rubbish." Instead, taking matters into her own hands, H.D. allows the protagonist to "clear away his own rubbish," in accordance with her own insistent practice (against Freud's explicit prohibition) of keeping notes on her analysis in the form of letters to Bryher.

But in the next instance of this figure, the analyst regains his authority, his agency, and (significantly) his benign universalism and willingness to close with the difficulties of others: "It was the very love of humanity that caused the Professor to stand guardian at the gate. . . . He would stand guardian, he would turn the whole stream of consciousness back into useful, into irrigation channels, so that none of this power be wasted" (*TF*, 156). The conjunction of these passages is puzzling, to say the least. Must the protagonist clear away his own rubbish, or shall Freud turn the current for him after all? And whom should we recognize as prime actor in this narrative?

H.D. concludes this meditation on oil vs. river metaphors, on measuring language vs. sweeping, figurative language, on male modes of assessment vs. female modes of understanding, by insisting on her

own more exalted metaphor of the river. *Tribute to Freud* offers one final, oblique reference to the unnavigable river, which evokes the danger, the mutual love, and the hope implicit in this jointly undertaken journey. In fact, this reference dominates the last pages of the book; and significantly, it for once signals an unequivocal faith in Freud and his methods without the ambivalence of a counterexample. H.D. offers an extended close reading of Goethe's lyric, "Mignon's Song" or "Kennst du das Land," a poem she had sung as a child, which she quotes in full from his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, 1795–96).⁴⁸ "In the last verse . . ." H.D. says, is the line,

Es stürzt der Fels,

the rock breaks or falls in ruins, and indeed this is our very present predicament; but

und über ihn die Flut

following, gives the impression of a living river; though 'and over it the flood' is the literal rendering. Ruins and the flood, but there remains our particular Ark or Barque—a canoe, I called it—that may, even yet, carry us through the seething channels to safe harbor. (*TF*, 162)

At first glimpse this seems a different metaphor altogether: a flood over the ruined rock of a craggy cliff, and the navigation through whitewater or even cataract to calm water.

Given, however, the importance of the unnavigable river in this text and H.D.'s wandering birchbark canoe at its opening, it is likely that this passage offers another perspective on that metaphor. H.D. identifies "our very present predicament" as analogous to the broken or fallen rock "ruins," suggesting both the craggy, romantic mountain landscape of Italy, where the character Mignon was born, and the girl's fragmented memories of her native land. The "Fels" or rocks tumbling in Goethe's flood find an echo in Freud's "Felsmassen," the rock masses clogging the patient's unnavigable river. Similarly, *Flut* might mean "stream" as much as "flood." Indeed, the river familiar to us from earlier passages might well be impassable due to the rocky impediments that create whitewater and its attendant swirls, undercurrents, and narrow "seething channels." In Goethe's poem, Mignon must cross over the raging torrent by way of a perilous, fog-shrouded bridge, while H.D. clearly envisions paddling the rapids by canoe—now "our" rather than "my" canoe. However, the goal for both is a smooth, safe journey. Significantly, in the novel, Mignon's song is preceded by

her hysterical collapse in Wilhelm's arms and mutual cries of love and loyalty. Not only the song but *Tribute to Freud* itself ends with the plea for Wilhelm (Mignon's rescuer, whom she calls "Father," and whom H.D. identifies with Freud) to accompany her to and through those dark and misty lands: "O Vater, lass uns ziehn! [Oh Father, let us go!]" The relevance for H.D.'s analysis is clear in Goethe's use of the verb *ziehen* for motion, pulling, passage (*durchziehen* is to traverse through difficulty) and in the girl's desire for Wilhelm's protection on the dangerous crossing to the land of her birth. Mignon might wish merely to travel her river safely, but H.D.'s use of the poem sketches a deeper kinship in which both young women must identify and face the fragmented, deep-seated obstacles impeding their personal journey toward authentic identity.

Although H.D. also associates the psychoanalytic journey with other metaphors for motion—traveling the "cloud-bridge" of Goethe's poem (*TF*, 164, 168) and "tunneling deep" (*TF*, 168)—she returns over and over again to the metaphor of a difficult journey through a winding, rock-strewn river. The river metaphor in *Tribute to Freud* allows her to foreground and dismiss the words she would most like to challenge, words that "weigh" her and "assess" what she values in the "business man's" currency. In all these passages, H.D. critiques Freud's more judgmental, "measured" (and measuring) terms as she accepts and claims as her own his most resonant, mythical formulations.⁴⁹ Because H.D. identifies divisive, assessing, measuring discourse as a masculine strategy, her use of the river metaphor places gender at the heart of narrative conflict, despite the apparent contradictions in her use of this metaphor. Her use of the river both mitigates Freud's gendering of discourse (Freud speaks of spears but he also speaks of rivers) and re-enacts that difference (Freud speaks of oil; but I speak of rivers).

To a certain extent, it's foolhardy to demand consistency of a text modeled on hysterical narrative. H.D. makes it clear that she enjoys contradiction and friction in her work. However, the turbulent areas do serve usefully (as in analysis, or indeed in rivers) to indicate significant or dangerous points. In this case, H.D. uses the river metaphor to represent an ungendered, universalizing discourse; however, the effect of the troubled river metaphor in H.D.'s text is to highlight the conflict inherent to the hysterical narrative and link that conflict to gender differentiation, just as in Freud's theory of narrative production. The river's meaning, for H.D. (universalizing), is thus precisely opposed to the work it does in her text (challenging and critiquing).⁵⁰ This conflict extends, as in Freud's case, outside the analysis to H.D.'s

relation to her authorial colleagues. She comments to Bryher that the analysis is revealing how much her own work emerges from a sense of gendered competition with male writers, saying, "I keep dreaming of literary men, Shaw, Cunninghame Grahame, now Noel Coward and Lawrence himself, over and over. It is important as book means *penis* evidently and as a 'writer,' only, am I an equal in uc-n [in the unconscious], in the right way, with men. Most odd."⁵¹

In H.D.'s revision of the Freudian case history, the hysterical narrative eventually overwhelms the evaluative, discriminating voice of the male physician. But paradoxically, H.D.'s very resistance to Freud (as one more of the set of male writers she must compete with) writes her even deeper into his model of narrative. Her text has internalized Freud's lessons: that narrative emerges from autobiography written in collaboration with another; that it is formally troubled by a gender-based, contestatory relation where a hidden resistance—what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls a "strategy" of "aggressive humility" —produces a more interesting, albeit "hysterical," text;⁵² and that the synthesis that a narrative strives for (here, between a Freudian hermeneutic and a universalizing feminism) is liable to collapse back into contradiction and difference, albeit a productive one. H.D. wants to update Freud's theory of narrative for Modernist women, but his theory both anticipates and assimilates her challenge. Ultimately, the internal contradictions in H.D.'s own use of the river metaphor produce that frictive dynamism of the hysterical narrative, one of the more cogent similarities between her narrative and his, and the mode he is least likely to want to own.

Freud's Own "Unnavigable River"

H.D.'s confusing statements about what Freud does and doesn't do identify a core attribute of his work: its productive embrace of conflict and contradiction. Paradoxically, the theoretical model that Freud uses to contain and make sense of hysterical narrative is itself not only born of conflict but also internally contradictory. The mark of the physician's final, positivist narrative should be its smooth, untroubled flow and its certain authority. However, Freud's narrative proves to be itself hysterical according to his own definition: formally vexed and produced through a gendered series of contentions that it cannot transcend. Freud's case histories generally demonstrate an astonishing ability to circumvent a linear narrative. He opts instead for a discursive, layered, tangential prose juxtaposing anecdote, history

(often of more than one patient), discussion, theory, and polemic. His case histories are characterized by gaps, jumps, repetitions, reversions, and revisions to an extent matched only by the hysterical patient's own narrative. As he warns the reader in "Wolf Man," "I can write a consecutive history neither of the treatment nor of the disease."⁵³ This is due, he implies, to the nature of the patient; for Freud's case history of "Little Hans," who is a precocious but otherwise normal boy, while it works through Hans's record of symptoms and statements multiple times, largely preserves its chronology each time.⁵⁴

Freud's evolving psychoanalytic methods challenged his ability to record his cases in forms congruent with the positivist tradition that he recognized. His developing theory of hysteria forced him even to abandon his initial technique of analysis as put forth in *Studies on Hysteria*. Freud warns his readers in *Dora* that: "psychoanalytic technique has been completely revolutionized. [In the *Studien*] the work of analysis started out from the symptoms, and aimed at clearing them up one after the other. . . . [Now] everything that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time" (*D*, 6). Contiguity becomes enough to link ideas and events; as Freud explains, "[A]n internal connection that is still undisclosed will announce its presence by means of a contiguity—a temporal proximity—of associations" (*D*, 32). Furthermore, his narrative can tolerate the juxtaposition of conflicting truths, for "thoughts in the unconscious live very comfortably side by side, and even contraries get on together without disputes—a state of things which persists often enough even in the conscious" (*D*, 54). Thus, in a narrative explicating the unconscious, explains Freud, "it is not necessary for the various meanings of a symptom to be compatible with one another, that is to fit together into a connected whole" In fact, "a single symptom corresponds quite regularly to several meanings simultaneously [and] can express several meanings in succession" (*D*, 46).

Freud's emphasis on letting the patient's proliferative, conflicting mental connections drive the process of analysis means that any record of his analysis will be similarly marked by this "piecemeal" approach to narrative, emphasizing the seemingly random, diffused, and overlapping emergence of important pieces of information through flashbacks to time periods "widely separated" from one another and from the present. At any particular moment, then, the narrative of *Dora* might move from the present time of analysis, to nonlinear "dream time," back to various moments of *Dora's* childhood, to Freud's own memories

of earlier cases and earlier moments in the history of psychoanalysis. His analysis similarly meanders through a series of alternative solutions to the mystery of Dora's symptoms (*D*, 102).

Freud argues that he cures the hysteric by curing her story, translating the secret of her sexuality from hysterical narrative to psychoanalytic case history. But critics have shown that the errors he deplores in the hysteric's story—gaps, inconsistencies, events out of sequence, with corrections added on rather than incorporated—mar Freud's own text.⁵⁵ His case history of Dora, for example, gets the year of analysis wrong. He hardly mentions Dora's innermost secret, her homosexual love for Frau K, which should serve (in his model) as the foundation on which all stands.⁵⁶ His text is not "unbroken"; Dora's abrupt dismissal of Freud, which he reads as a betrayal, serves as the originary trauma for his text. And this man of science refuses the opportunity to organize his material; he chooses instead to "present the material [of analysis] . . . in the somewhat haphazard order in which it recurs to [his] mind" (*D*, 86). He presents the reader with a hysterical narrative of hysterical discovery, that is, rather than an ordered analysis of that discovery. In sum, Freud criticizes the hysterical narrative for a confusion that his narrative in fact shares. The collapse of Freud's case history into hysterical narrative undermines both his criticism of the hysteric's bad story and his pretext for intervention.

If Freud's own narrative is, like Dora's, formally vexed rather than "smooth and exact," it also demonstrates another important quality of the hysterical narrative: its generation in and through conflict, and its inherent contentiousness. This applies both within the relation of physician and patient, as I have shown, and outside that relation, in Freud's anxious relations to his professional colleagues. Freud's anxiety about other researchers' resistance to his work pervades his writing.⁵⁷ He frequently mentions that he is writing for an audience and defends himself proactively against scorn and skepticism; thus his frequent locution of being "forced" to come to a certain (perhaps more shaky) conclusion, implying that logic, not personal interest or hobbyhorse, drives his chain of deductions and discoveries. He is frequently defensive about his claims, anticipating critique, as when he argues, "the exacting demands which hysteria makes upon physician and investigator can be met only by the most sympathetic spirit of inquiry and not by an attitude of superiority and contempt" (*D*, 9). Indeed, he sees psychoanalysis as a science characterized by competition rather than collaboration. In his case history of the Wolf Man, he structures the entire last half of his text as a series of defenses against

opposing interpretations, those which resist the idea of infantile sexuality and the parents' copulation in the primal scene. He characterizes this alternate interpretation as "the scheme of my opponents," referring to Adler, Jung, and the like repeatedly as "opponents" or "adversaries." For instance, he imagines that his experienced evaluation of the outcome of cases will not sway "an adversary who has not experienced the analysis himself."⁵⁸ No easy allocation of authorial power can adequately explain the imbricated relationships that produce narrative in such a setting. What is certain is that narrative here becomes both healing procedure and contested ground, in a tension far beyond the convention of clinical physicians' trained skepticism toward their patients' reports of illness, or their colleagues' published hypotheses.

Most important, *Dora* is the story of both Dora and her interlocutor Freud, neither of whom can transcend the internal conflicts produced by the analysis. Freud does not discuss the unique and significant charge that occurs when his narrative is driven by the shifting tensions between his rationalist discourse and its hysterical analogue, both necessary to the case history, and both promising an "end" for the case history.

Ultimately, Freud's case history disarms its potential opponents, whether Dora or H.D., by incorporating conflict at its very heart. I certainly do not want to replicate Freud's gesture, where even "no" does not mean "no." But we need to consider how a theory of narrative such as Freud's, which claims conflict as necessary to the text, deflates any challenge as mere "resistance." In Freud's case, the strain of holding two discourses in a relation of hierarchical opposition while simultaneously choreographing their synthesis renders his case history particularly liable to the kind of collapse back into its abject other that I have here chronicled. H.D. works hard to reverse Freud's subordination of the "feminine" and align her text against the "smooth and exact" narrative logic that Freud endorses but cannot produce. She challenges Freud's gendering, divisive discourse even as she pays tribute to his insight as both true and inclusive. But the spark of conflict that his narrative model rouses in her proves uniquely productive.

Freudian Modernism/Modernist Freudianism

Steven Marcus has noted the resemblances between this disjointed narrative structure of *Dora* and that of a Modernist novel. He comments,

The general form of what Freud has written bears certain suggestive resemblances to a modern experimental novel. Its narrative and expository course, for example, is neither linear nor rectilinear; instead its organization is plastic, involuted, and heterogeneous and follows spontaneously an inner logic that seems frequently to be at odds with itself; it often loops back around itself and is multi-dimensional in its representation of both its material and itself. Its continuous innovations in formal structure seem unavoidably to be dictated by its substance, by the dangerous, audacious, disreputable, and problematical character of the experiences being represented and dealt with, and by the equally scandalous intentions of the author and the outrageous character of the role he has had the presumption to assume.⁵⁹

Despite Freud's rationalist ideals, his text betrays its allegiance to a less logical sequence. Marcus's insight sums up much of what is most troubling and interesting about Freud's unusual model for the psychoanalytic case history.

However, the elements Marcus identifies here as "novelistic" are equally at home in the literary narratives known as memoir and autobiography. Here, too, we find a strong link between Freud's work and his literary context; for if the novel was a central genre in Modernist authors' efforts to explore new frontiers in the written aesthetic, one could argue that autobiography is the mode that the aesthetic of Modernism centrally both rejects and embraces. High Modernist prose techniques typically call into question the possibility of an objective and reliable summation of the self, just as Lytton Strachey redefined biography with *Eminent Victorians*. Yet many texts in the Modernist canon, especially among the experimentalists, rework autobiographical material; besides H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, which I discuss here, consider much of the rest of H.D.'s prose, Barnes's *Nightwood*, Ford's *The Good Soldier*, Hemingway's "Nick Adams" stories, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, much of Rhys's fiction, Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* novels, and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Even those Modernist novels that are not working from personal memory tend to emphasize not the web of social relations as much as the record of a self developing through experience and reflection.

H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* is notable for focusing on its vexed relation to Freud, but all these texts create their record of the Modernist subject in a context where Freud had recently redefined both subjectivity and autobiography. So while autobiography had been shifting for

some time, Freud represents a watershed moment for the development of the genre; and each of the narrators above tells its story in some relation to an autobiographical tradition that had recently seen Freud's intervention. While Modernist authors might not always choose to write the story of the self using the model that Freud so famously made prominent—indeed, some ignore and some critique that model—his cultural authority means that his model is one prominent possibility open to them. Their choice thus becomes visible *as* a choice, much as British biologists writing in the tradition of natural theology after 1859 must be seen as choosing not to adopt the Darwinian narrative of natural selection. Modernists, whether they opt to address this or not, write in a world irretrievably shaped by Freud's model.

There are other important elements of the Freudian case history, such as a disbelief in conscious perception as an accurate indicator of the real, a willingness to explore taboo subjects like sexuality, and a nostalgia for lost meaning. Although these are not my focus in this essay, they render his model of "hysterical narrative" particularly useful for a Modernist aesthetic of autobiographical narrative dedicated to dismantling the linear organicist narratives of the nineteenth century. Most narratives that use a model of writing similar to Freud's do not, of course, meet all these characteristics. Many stream-of-consciousness novels, for example, create a narrative present that combines the forward motion of real time with scraps of memory emerging into the narrative without any organized attempt to delve into the past as occurs in psychoanalysis. However, many novels' structures parallel Freud's model of autobiographical narrative. These are grounded in a psychological center of consciousness as their most distinctive voice or site of identity, and they feature a troubled or vexed "stream" of narrative and a gendered narrative frame.

Freud's unique genre of narrative offers a powerful model to Modernist writers, for in many ways it has more in common with literary than scientific writing.⁶⁰ Literary texts like the novel or memoir, after all, like the Freudian case history, may span huge contextual differences in time and place; mimic the vacillations of human memory; display repetitive, overdetermined patterns of imagery and influence; and derive meaning from a collective of differentiated scenes. Scientific narratives like the clinical case history or experimental report, on the other hand, developed as a result of an increasing valorization of concise comprehensiveness, linear logic, and an efficient, chronological record of cause and effect.⁶¹

The Freudian case history proposes and illustrates a model of narrative as mapping an unnavigable river: a formally troubled autobiography generated in a gender-based conflict, this model strives for an ideal of “smooth and exact” narrative that it cannot demonstrate. Indeed, such an ideal is impossible to achieve, given Freud’s theory that conflict is central to the curative, and narrative, process. Freud’s ideal of an untroubled, clearly mapped river of narrative, in the end, falls to a more influential, and ultimately more powerful model, driven by the reality of his immensely productive, conflicted narratives of the self.

Freud’s incorporation of conflict ironically energizes both his narrative and H.D.’s through a productive friction that ultimately favors the hysterical discourse he seeks to tame. Modernist writers are thus offered a model of personal narrative dedicated to an ideal of positivist rationality but rooted in a contradiction that it can neither escape nor resolve. In the end, Freud’s model of narrative may be most instructive for its reminder of the dynamic instability at the heart of the hysterical narrative.

NOTES

1. Showalter, “On Hysterical Narrative,” 24–25. Parts of this essay were incorporated into the chapter “Hysterical Narratives” in her book *Hystories*. Kahane traces the prehistory of hysteria in Chapter One of *Passions of the Voice*.

2. Showalter, 29–31.

3. Kahane’s unique interpretation of hysterical narrative is evident in her reversal of the power dynamic that Freud claims in *Dora*. “By subverting an implicitly gendered narrative syntax that marked the speaking and desiring subject as male, the figure of the woman with the potent voice [the central figure of Kahane’s book] augured a sexual anarchy that threatened the narrator’s ability to tell a coherent story” (*Passions*, x).

4. Showalter, 31. Indeed, the version of this essay in *Hystories* continues by discussing male hysteria in more detail.

5. Showalter, 33.

6. Freud, *Dora*, 10. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text with the page number preceded by the designation “D.”

7. *Dora* was written in January 1901 but not published until 1905.

8. Logan, *Nerves and Narratives*, especially Introduction and Chapter One.

9. *Tribute to Freud* was written in two sections. “Writing on the Wall” was written in 1944 and published in *Life & Letters Today* in 1945–46; “Advent” was written during analysis in 1933 and revised in December 1948. They were published together as *Tribute to Freud* in 1956.

10. See Roy Porter, Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, Mary E. Fissell, Brian Hurwitz.

11. Caldwell, *Literature and Medicine*, 143–55. For skepticism in physicians’ use of the patient narrative, see Jonathan Gilles.

12. On Freud’s position in his own texts, see especially Steven Marcus (“Freud and *Dora*”) and Karen Bryce Funt.

13. Freud's case history underscores the truth of Rick Rylance's assertion that "the medical narrative of the nineteenth century is a porous form," although the force of professional norms by late-century should not be underestimated (269). See, for instance, Sarah Winter.

14. On the process of analogy in Freud's early analysis, see Chapter Six of my *Revising the Clinic*.

15. In its essential combativeness, Freud's collaboration with the patient is constitutively different from the "narrative write-up" that James Hunter Wood discusses.

16. Gilman's use of this point is linked to his larger argument about Freud's problematic status as a (potentially "degenerate" himself) Jew in Vienna. Gilman, "Case" 160.

17. Indeed, Freud often sought out collaborators in his early years: *Studies On Hysteria* was written with Breuer, and Kostenbaum has demonstrated how productive for Freud was his friendship with Fliess. Berkenkotter discusses how Freud relies on and manipulates Dora's words through the use of dialogue and reported speech. Showalter reviews critics who show how reliant early psychoanalysis was on hysteria in particular ("Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," 319–20).

18. Hemmings, 110.

19. Berkenkotter, *Patient Tales*, 123–25.

20. Berkenkotter, 107, 108, 119, 125.

21. Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, 282. The sense of "resistance" as opposition is just as strong in the German word, *Widerstand*.

22. Joseph Wortis documents an equally uncomfortable relation with the Professor, this time from the point of view of the patient. Freud's own *Autobiography* discusses resistance as follows: "it was necessary to overcome something that fought against one in the patient; it was necessary to make an expenditure of effort on one's own part in order to compel and subdue it" (53).

23. See, for example, Showalter, *Hystories*, 94–99; Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender"; Kahane, *Passions*, 9–13.

24. Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," 304, 333.

25. Gilman, *Freud*, 115.

26. See, for example, Auerbach, Evans, Steven Marcus (*Freud and the Culture*), Sarah Kofman, Bernheimer and Kahane, Appignanesi and Forrester, Mahony, (*Freud's Dora*), Showalter, Toews, Lehman, Berkenkotter.

27. In *Revising the Clinic*, I examine Freud's early writing to trace his debts to contrasting generic traditions: clinical scientific medical reports and the literary genre of romance.

28. Carol Berkenkotter notes that Freud is writing at a time when the convention for psychoanalytic case histories would have been chronological and scientific (103–04). She emphasizes the extent to which his case histories depart from this mode; however, as I will argue, his case histories also rely upon a rationalist underlying logic that is obscured but not diminished by his reliance on the apparent randomness of association and contiguity in his interpretations. Alfred Tauber argues that the later Freud turns away from positivism to an acceptance of the speculative nature of psychoanalysis (*Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher*); I am focusing here, however, on Freud's earlier work.

29. A number of critics in the collection *In Dora's Case* comment on the drive toward interpretation in Freud's work. See Rose, 138; Marcus 84–85; Moi, 194; Hertz, 232ff. See also Kofman, 7.

30. The original reads, "Ich beginne dann zwar die Behandlung mit der Anforderung, mir die ganze Lebens- und Krankheitsgeschichte zu erzählen, aber was ich darauf zu hören bekomme, ist zur Orientierung noch immer nicht genügend. Diese erste Erzählung ist einem nicht schiffbaren Strom vergleichbar, dessen Bett bald durch Felsmassen verlegt, bald durch Sandbänke zerteilt und untief gemacht wird."

31. Four years later, in "Little Hans," Freud offers a slightly different image of the jointly undertaken journey of physician and patient in uncovering resistance to unconscious material: "The physician is a step in front of [the patient] in knowledge; and the patient follows along *his own road*, until the two meet at the appointed goal" (121, emphasis added). But elsewhere it is clear that Freud envisions the physician as alongside the patient, helping him clear his way forward. In the introduction to the case, he refers to the joint task of rubble-clearing when he contrasts the ease of analysis with a child to the difficulties in tackling "the sexual impulses and wishes which we dig out so laboriously in adults from among their own debris" (6). Freud also turns to this kind of language of obstacles and rubble elsewhere. As he concludes "Wolf Man," for example, he comments, "psychoanalytic treatment . . . can only get rid of the obstacles and clear the [way]" [*nur die Hindernisse beseitigen und die Wege gangbar machen*] (278; 126) and "psychoanalysis . . . after forcing its way through the strata of what has been acquired by the individual [*nachdem sie durch die Schichtung des individuell Erworbenen hindurchgedrungen ist*], comes at last upon traces of what has been inherited" (280; 130).

32. The German word "Strom" has a number of meanings, including river, current, or even tide, but Freud's later reference to the streambed clarifies that he is picturing a river.

33. Mahony, *Freud's Dora*, 134.

34. See J. Gill Holland.

35. Mahony discusses the many incidents of fluid imagery in *Dora*, including "current" (*Freud's Dora*, 133–34). See also, for example, "Wolf Man," 223.

36. See, for example, her comment in *Tribute* on his essay on wit and humor: "I think it is impossible to assess this or appreciate it in the translation" (157).

37. Susan Stanford Friedman has edited H.D. and Bryher's letters from this period. See Norman Holland for a comparison of H.D.'s presentation in *Tribute to Freud* and in her letters, which more explicitly use psychoanalytic terms to discuss the progress of her analysis. Appignanesi and Forrester also discuss H.D.'s familiarity with psychoanalysis (387–88).

38. H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 14. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text with the page number preceded by the designation "TF".

39. H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 1, 8, 11, 17, 64; 17.

40. For H.D.'s relation to Freud, see especially Chisholm, "H.D.'S Autoheterography" and *H.D.'S Freudian Poetics*; DuPlessis and Friedman, Friedman, "Against Discipleship"; Norman Holland.

41. H.D., *Selected Poems*, 102.

42. Other than the examples I discuss here, she refers to a river (8, 37, 53, 56, 61, 62, 128, 139); a stream (17); and of course the young man not named Brooks whose name "suggest[s] streams and rivers" (8); but these instances do not noticeably invoke the notion of a clogged, impassable river. Many of them do cluster around dreamwork and the unconscious, and around boating on or through a river. The river was an important figure for H.D., as in her *By Avon River*, an earlier challenge to an authoritative male precursor, in this case Shakespeare.

43. H.D. also invokes Freud's archaeologist metaphor, saying, "he must dig it out from its buried hiding-place, he himself must find the question before it could be answered" (84).

44. Friedman also makes this point, but reads it as less of a challenge to Freud. She argues that H.D. "resolve[s] their conflict" by focusing on the universalizing aspects of his discourse (*Psyche* 117ff).

45. In a reminder that it is best not to peg any single element of the hysterical narrative too rigidly, H.D. complicates the river metaphor's role as a critique of Freud's gender dynamic and his supposed businessman's materialism when she herself uses the metaphor, "I struck oil." The passage in *Tribute* clearly construes "I struck oil" as a materialistic, uncongenial mode of thinking about analysis, as elsewhere in *Tribute* where the "exploitation" of the oil fields is associated with

the slippage from "Gods" to "Goods" (141). However, in a letter to Bryher early in the analysis, H.D. also uses this very phrase, "I struck oil," to enthuse about Freud and his Pallas Athené, specifically his *lack* of materialism. She writes, "He . . . dug out a Pallas, about six inches high that he said was his favourite. O lovely, lovely little old papa [Freud]. I am so calm, so peaceful. Fido, he said he would attend to the money, he never would take it BEFORE and he will send you in the 'note' at the end of the month: he was adamant about it, a stubborn little old Oedipus. Well, I have struck psychic oil." Here the oil metaphor and the reference to the Pallas Athene signal an acquiescence with his model and the spiritual link she feels with Freud, who seems almost reluctant to accept her payments (Bryher was funding H.D.'s analysis) (Letter of March 2, 1933 to Bryher [*Analyzing Freud*], 39). H.D. also uses the term in a later discussion of opposition to psychoanalysis, saying "I think you and I (some others) have struck oil—I am overwhelmed at the moment at the sheer discovery [sic], have had no time, nor power, nor mechanical apparatus suitable for mining (what does one do with oil?) my own particular vein or pocket." (Letter to Conrad Aiken, August 20, 1933 [*Analyzing Freud*], 368).

46. This passage accuses Freud of being business-like because of his ethnic and religious heritage, of being modern because of his antiquity: "the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ran in his veins." However, in the "I struck oil" passage, H.D. accuses Freud of being business-like because he *evades* a deep identity with that ancient river of "Israel and the Psalmist"; and in the "great stream or ocean" passage she praises him for his alliance with the underground river of the ages, of "Joseph's day." In other words, H.D. seems to depict Freud as too Jewish, not Jewish enough, and productively Jewish. Others have discussed the question of H.D.'s anti-Semitism; Freedman points out that few had addressed this issue (186–87), but Spiro examines it at length.

47. See H.D.'s letter of May 3, 1933 to Bryher (*Analyzing Freud*), 236–37.

48. For H.D.'s knowledge of this poem as a child, see *Tribute to Freud*, 159. For the poem, see *Tribute* 144. The final verse, in full, reads:

Kennst du den Berg un seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;
Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut—
Kennst du ihn wohl?

Dahin! Dahin
Geht unser Weg! o Vater, laß uns ziehn! (*Tribute* 144)

Or, in Carlyle's translation of 1824:

Know'st thou the mountain bridge that hangs on cloud?
The mules in mist grope o'er the torrent loud,
In caves lie coil'd the dragon's ancient brood,
The crag leaps down and over it the flood:
Know'st thou it, then?
'Tis there! 'tis there

Our way runs; O my father, wilt thou go?

49. Compare with Mark Reford's comments on Italo Calvino's two Freuds, the genius and the philistine.

50. Similarly, the oil's meaning in her letters (valuable resource) is precisely opposed to the work it does in *Tribute* (crass materialism).

51. Letter of May 15, 1933 to Bryher (*Analyzing Freud*), 280.

52. DuPlessis, "Language," 273.

53. Freud, "Wolf Man," 169.

54. ("Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" ["Analyse der Phobie enes Fünfjährigen Knaben"])

55. See, for example, Hertz, *Moi*.
56. See *Dora*, 96, at the end of the long footnote. Freud barely acknowledges this love in the body of his text.
57. Winter provides a nuanced examination of Freud's ambiguous position among his scientific and medical colleagues.
58. Freud, *Three Case Histories*, 210.
59. Marcus, "Freud and Dora," 64, italics added.
60. For more on the analogy between Freud's case history and novelistic form, see Marcus, "Freud and Dora"; Mahony, *Freud as a Writer*. Freud's case history is further novelistic in that it centers on the trials of an individual—although that individual is as likely to be Freud as the patient.
61. Gross, Harmon, and Reidy write that the nineteenth-century scientific report is a "master presentational system approaching maturity," with meaningful formal elements such as title and author credits, headings, citations, introductions, and conclusions, (138) and "increasingly more complex arguments" bridging "observations and experimental results" with "responsible theorizing": "a gradual shift from description to explanation" (140). In geology, for example, "the whole enterprise undergoes a shift [during the nineteenth century] from a science of facts to a science of causes" (159).

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