

To put it another way, he declares allegiance to a Freudianism of “bad faith” in order to initiate himself into a new interpretive method. But this double relation to a doctrinal superego and a *Bildung* allowed him neither to complete his autobiography nor to devote himself wholeheartedly to completing his study of Flaubert. It would seem that the intellectual toolkit he had assembled following *Being and Nothingness* did nothing but sterilize Sartre’s writing, and that it had to be made to implode so that the recital of himself and the biography of Flaubert could both “burst forth.”

It was the film director John Huston who in 1958 gave Sartre the chance to break out of his own system. When Huston commissioned Sartre to write a screenplay on the life and work of Sigmund Freud, elements of psychoanalysis had already found their way into the movies. But Hollywood’s psychoanalysis was not that of the psychoanalytic community in the United States, even though, as emigrants from old Europe, many American film directors had a shared background with the psychoanalysts who were members of the International Psychoanalytical Association.<sup>20</sup>

Exile had not, however, had the same effect on the two groups. Whereas the therapists had chosen to integrate into the American health system (which obliged them to pursue medical careers and become servants of a hygienist ideal<sup>21</sup>), the filmmakers had adopted Freud’s doctrine and transformed it into a powerful tool for criticizing the ideals of the American way of life. So it came about that Freudianism was made to serve the interests of an ideal of society on one hand and was used to criticize its adaptive aberrations or to reconnect with the high tradition of European psychoanalysis on the other. Examples of the latter would include Elia Kazan, who drew a daunting portrait of the puritan America of the 1930s in *Splendor in the Grass*, and Charlie Chaplin, who in *Lime-light* re-created the London of his childhood in telling the story of an amorous dancer who is cured of her paralysis by a clown with a middle European appearance.<sup>22</sup>

Though he was American born, John Huston shared this dissenting and nostalgic ideal. His purpose in making a biography of Freud was

to highlight the original moment of discovery. This is why, wishing to criticize the official psychoanalysis of American psychiatrists, he turned to Sartre, a man of the left and a philosopher of freedom not known for indulging in Freudian hagiography. Transformed into a Sartrean hero, Huston's onscreen Freud thus had the potential to be a true adventurer of modern science, combined with a tragic hero of sorts straight from the pages of *No Exit*.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of 1958 Sartre sent Huston a ninety-five-page synopsis, which led to a firm contract. A few months later he completed a new version, but alas, it was too long to be filmed. Then in October 1959 Sartre traveled with Arlette El Kaïm to Huston's home in Ireland, so they could work together on a final shooting script. The encounter turned into a bout of intellectual pugilistics. Incapable of either mutual understanding or mutual respect, the two men, so alike and yet so different, kept trying to dominate each other, until the final misunderstanding was hatched: a superb but unfilmable screenplay, and a fascinating failure of a film.<sup>24</sup>

Huston saw Sartre as a man completely unable to listen to anyone else, for whom the body did not exist:

He made notes—of his own words—as he talked. There was no such thing as a conversation with him; he talked incessantly, and there was no interrupting him. You'd wait for him to catch his breath, but he wouldn't. The words came out in an absolute torrent. . . . Sartre was a little barrel of a man, and as ugly as a human being can be. His face was both bloated and pitted, his teeth were yellowed and he was wall-eyed. He wore a gray suit, black shoes, white shirt, tie and vest. His appearance never changed. He'd come down in the morning in this suit, and he would still be wearing it the last thing at night. The suit always appeared to be clean, and his shirt was clean, but I never knew if he owned one gray suit or several identical gray suits. . . . One morning he came down and his cheek was swollen. He had a bad tooth. I said, "We'd best get you to Dublin with that." "No, no. Let's just go in to Galway." I didn't know any dentist in Galway, but that didn't matter to him. So we made an appointment with a local dentist and took him in.

He was out in a few minutes, having had the tooth pulled. A tooth more or less made no difference in Sartre's cosmos. The physical world he left to others; his was of the mind.<sup>25</sup>

As for Sartre, the gaze he cast on Huston's world in his letters to Simone de Beauvoir was the ferocious one of a body snatcher:

Through a number of similar rooms wanders a tall romantic, sad and isolated: our friend Huston, perfectly vacant, literally incapable of speaking to those whom he has invited. . . . What a lot of babble there is here! Everyone has his own complex, ranging from masochism to animal fierceness. Don't imagine, though, that we are in hell. It's more like an enormous cemetery, full of corpses with their frozen complexes. . . . The inner landscape of my boss, the great Huston, is a lot like that: heaps of ruins, abandoned houses, plots of wasteland, swamps, a thousand traces of human presence. But the man himself has emigrated, I have no idea where. He isn't even gloomy: he is empty, except in his moments of infantile vanity when he dons a red tuxedo, or goes horseback riding (not very well), or reviews his paintings and directs his workers. It is impossible to hold his attention for five minutes: he has lost the capacity for work, and he avoids reasoning.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Sartre and Huston were thinking along the same lines about what to feature in the life of Freud. Both wished to illustrate the groundbreaking moment when a scientist takes the step that will make him the founder of a new science. In Freud's case this was the moment when he gave hysteria the status of a true neurosis by reintroducing into its etiology the question of sexuality, which Charcot had blanked out and detached from simulation, in order to make hysteria a functional illness. The foregrounding of sexual etiology guided Freud toward the discovery of an unconscious independent of consciousness and nonpsychological in nature, down a path opened up by the interpretation of dreams and the elaboration of the notions of fantasy and transference. This feat was not accomplished at one stroke, and Freud's advance toward the truth was

continuously disturbed by the shadows of error. As Sartre said: “To arrive at correct ideas, you have to begin by explaining false ideas, and that is a long process. . . . Which we tried to do—and that’s what interested Huston above all, not when Freud’s theories had already made him famous but the time when, at around age thirty, he had got things completely wrong and his ideas had led him to a desperate impasse.”<sup>27</sup>

To flesh out his protagonist, Sartre put to work all the knowledge of psychoanalytic culture that he had acquired since writing *Being and Nothingness*. But he also added three new sources previously unknown to him: the letters of Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, published in French in 1956 under the title *La naissance de la psychanalyse*, the *Studies on Hysteria* that appeared in the same year (comprising Josef Breuer’s account of the case of Anna O.), and finally the first volume in English of the monumental Freud biography by Ernest Jones, from which Michèle Vian had read him a number of chapters while she was working on the French translation.<sup>28</sup> Through these works he became acquainted with Freud’s complex relationships with three of the major figures in his intellectual formation: Theodor Meynert, Breuer, and Fliess. He also discovered two versions of the story of Anna O., Breuer’s and especially Jones’s, which assigned this female hysteric a role that became legendary in the history of the psychoanalytic movement.<sup>29</sup> Additionally there was the episode of Freud’s meeting with Martin Charcot at la Salpêtrière.

Sartre condensed into a unified drama events that had actually unfolded between 1885 and 1908, which I briefly summarize. Basing himself on Charcot’s theses, Freud had tried to demonstrate the existence of masculine hysteria to his Viennese colleagues. The point at issue was fundamental, because if it were once established that hysteria were a psychical illness unrelated to the uterus and thus to the genital organs, it would apply as much to men as it did to women, even though the symptoms might be expressed most severely in women. In order to detach hysteria from its genital substratum, Charcot moved away from a sexual etiology. In Vienna, Freud clashed especially with the redoubtable Meynert, his instructor in psychiatry, who in denying the existence of masculine hysteria was actually rejecting the modern conception of hysteria advanced by Charcot.<sup>30</sup>

In this great epic of genesis, in which Freud advanced toward a new conception of the unconscious, such conflicts amounted to more than mere abstract jousts. The opponents were men of flesh and blood, themselves suffering from the very symptoms whose existence they were debating. Meynert, an eccentric character, a liar, an alcoholic, and a neurotic, understood perfectly well what was at stake, even though he did not grasp its importance for the history of science. A good clinician, he knew that his own case was one of hysteria, and that therefore hysteria might very well occur in males. The struggle he waged against Freud over a matter of science was none the less neurotic or subjective for that. Before dying he confessed the nature of his “illness” to Freud and revealed his art of dissimulation to him.<sup>31</sup>

That Charcot had been forced to set aside the genital substratum in order to give a new definition of hysteria did not prevent the scientists of the late nineteenth century from accepting the importance of the sexual factor in the genesis of the neuroses. But none of them was able to *theorize* this hypothesis, which went back to antiquity. Freud alone proved capable of breaking through this barrier by shifting the *whole* problematic away from the terrain of genitality. In the initial phase, it was the interest he took in the case of a young woman of the Vienna bourgeoisie, Bertha Pappenheim, whom Breuer was treating using the “cathartic” method, that enabled Freud to locate the sexual origin of neurosis. He subsequently extended this diagnosis to other cases of female hysteria, while Breuer remained aloof. In the second phase, an even more audacious gesture was required, since Freud had to turn away from the spectacle of what could be observed, and imagine a reality all the more true in that it lay concealed behind the appearances of a deceptive evidentness.

Freud accomplished this gesture while in contact with the Berlin physician Wilhelm Fliess, between 1892 and 1902. Throughout their relationship, which he would later refer to as his *self-analysis*, he was continuously in error. And not content to propose and then refute erroneous hypotheses, he and Fliess traded patients who served as guinea pigs in Freud’s chaotic advance toward the truth.<sup>32</sup>

Reversing the position of Charcot, he accepted the evidence of sexual causality in the origin of the neuroses. Certain subjects, he said, undergo

real traumas in childhood or during the course of their lives. In the street or in the family setting, children are often seduced, raped, or sexually exploited by adults and relatives. The memory of these traumas is so painful that they prefer to forget or repress them. Hearing such stories recounted by Viennese women, Freud came to accept the validity of what they were saying, and constructed his first hypothesis concerning repression upon the so-called seduction theory. He thought that, because they really had been seduced, hysterical women were afflicted with neurotic disturbances. He then proceeded to accuse fathers all over the world, including his own, of being perverts.

Fliess did not push him in this direction, but tried to make Freud accept a conception of science in which error and experiment would have no place, with totalitarian certitude overriding genuine speculation. An adept of a theory of sexuality both mystical and organicist, Fliess related nasal mucous to genital activity,<sup>33</sup> thought that life was conditioned by periodic phenomena related to the bisexual nature of the human construct, and had already noted the polymorphous character of infantile sexuality. Falling entirely under the spell of Fliess's paranoiac seduction, Freud abandoned his own false seduction theory and evolved toward a conception of science capable of accounting for the reality confronting him.<sup>34</sup>

By dint of listening to hysterical patients, Freud came up against an impossibility: not all fathers are rapists, and yet hysterics are not lying when they say they are victims of sexual seduction on their part. He was therefore compelled to advance a hypothesis that could account for two contradictory verities. Freud accomplished this by retreating from hard evidence. He perceived two things: on one hand women invent, without lying or feigning, seduction scenes that never took place, and on the other, even if these seductions have taken place, they do not explain the outbreak of a neurosis. To explain these two facts and make them consistent, Freud replaced the seduction theory with the theory of sexual fantasy, opening the road to a doctrine of psychical reality grounded in the unconscious.

It is well known that all Freud's contemporaries had conceived of the existence of this famous "other scene," but there is no doubt that he was the first to indicate its function in resolving the enigma of sexual causa-

tion: sexual causation originates in fantasy, even when a real trauma has occurred, because the reality of fantasy is of a different kind than material reality. In taking this step, Freud freed himself from Fliess's seduction, though Fliess himself had never been a follower of the seduction theory.

In 1958 the sources available to Sartre were incomplete. Not only had the correspondence with Fliess been expurgated by Freud's heirs, to the point that it failed to convey the terrible mistakes into which Freud had been drawn, but Jones's account of the history of Bertha Pappenheim did not conform in the least to the historical truth.<sup>35</sup> Yet notwithstanding these deficiencies, Sartre's Freud was both truer than life and less fictional than the Freud, part authoritarian and part tranquil paterfamilias, portrayed in the pages of Ernest Jones. Instead of riveting his hero to a putatively linear destiny, in the manner of psychobiography, Sartre pulled off the tour de force of portraying a Faustian scientist, a creature of light and shadow, haunted by desire and sexuality and in revolt against the established order. It is impossible not to be reminded of Bertolt Brecht's Galileo in the theater and Alexandre Koyre's Galileo in the history of science.<sup>36</sup>

Sartre was well aware of the unwontedness of his own position. He who had always denied the existence of the unconscious was now dealing at close quarters with its inventor—a Sartrean situation par excellence, so brilliantly did it illustrate the idea that one discovers in the other, and *against* the other, what one is oneself. Sartre's Freud was thus the contrary of Sartre: a paterfamilias of bourgeois lifestyle, he never had a woman other than his wife after marriage. Doubtless this was because sexual probity was a necessary condition of his advance toward a new definition of human sexuality. If Freud had had carnal relations with the hysterics who offered themselves to his gaze, he would have been unable either to theorize transference or understand the erroneous character of the seduction theory. Such was his destiny as a man of science.

Sartre accepted these evident facts. But he could not help attributing a Sartrean approach to the founding father. Freud, he said, "is a man who undertakes to know others because he sees it as the only way to know himself, and he sees that he must conduct his research on others and on

himself. One knows oneself through others, one knows others through oneself."<sup>37</sup> A curious dialectical reversal, since in fact we know that Freud proceeded in exactly the opposite way. Not succeeding in knowing others, he had been forced to discover himself in order to find out about others. That the real Freud had not been "philosophically" Sartrean did not prevent Sartre from reconstructing a perfectly Freudian Freud: more rigorous, for that matter, and truer than the one Freud himself wished to portray in his *Selbstdarstellung*.<sup>38</sup> For Sartre had at his disposal an instrument not available to Freud: a theory of the subject grounded in a philosophy of consciousness. That alone was capable of making this character exist as he journeyed from error toward truth along the twisting path of a ruse of the intellect.

As his counterpart, Sartre invented an astonishing Fliess, a sort of interwar Mephisto right out of the world of Thomas Mann. A doppelgänger of Freud, a visionary like him, devilishly Nietzschean, he seems to belong to that race of scientists doomed to failure, who prefer making bargains with the dark powers to giving up their false hypotheses. As molded by Sartre, Fliess thus becomes Freud's Mister Hyde, his impulsive archangel, his bad conscience. Here the philosopher readily plays on the opposition between the two antagonistic sites of Germanic culture: on one hand Vienna, the soft, carefree, vain, anti-Semitic city, and on the other the liberal city of Berlin, open to the Enlightenment and to progress. Each is here portrayed as jealous of the other, just as Freud was jealous of Fliess and vice versa. Filled with Prussian arrogance, the Sartrean Fliess has all the features of an ultraleftist of genitality, a sort of Wilhelm Reich before the fact, who pushes Freud to accept the false theory of seduction so as to avoid having to revise his own conceptions of sexuality. One is reminded of the von Gerlach family in *The Condemned of Altona*, a work for the stage written in the same period as the *Freud* screenplay.<sup>39</sup> A believer in hygienism, Fliess is fundamentally presented by Sartre as a figure of the superego, disparaging Vienna and its disorder, and continually attempting to keep Freud from indulging in his favorite vice: tobacco.

As for Meynert, he appears as the living incarnation of the theory of bad faith Sartre had put forward in *Being and Nothingness*. Crushed for

having lied to himself, this celebrated Viennese physician, in his Sartrean incarnation, at once resembles Fliess for extravagance and Breuer for submission to the established order. For the rest, Sartre presents him as a classic case of male hysteria, a character abject one moment and capable of arousing sympathy the next.

In this whole affair among men, in which Freud moved from a powerful revolt against his father to the invention of the Oedipus complex, meaning in Sartrean terms from alienation to liberty, women play an important role. There are the wives and mothers first of all: Amalia, Freud's mother; Martha, his wife; Mathilde, the wife of Breuer. Bourgeois conformists, they are not depicted as ridiculous characters but as vanquished heroines incapable of acceding to freedom. Constrained by conjugal love and maternity, they contribute nothing, according to Sartre, to the intellectual adventure that torments the men whose existence they share. Thus they are both excluded from the realm of creativity and victimized by an inner terror that is no more than the expression of their alienation. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Sartre creates the splendid reign of the hysterical woman Anna O., here rebaptized Cecily.

In the screenplay she is made to bear the extreme unhappiness of the female condition at the end of the nineteenth century. Flesh girded with shame; speech rent with anguish; features reduced to a mouthed howl; incomprehensible movements; frenetic agitations; paralysis; deafness: these are the ravages inscribed on women's bodies by the prohibition of pleasure. But in making a pact with witchery the Sartrean hysteric becomes a free subject, so strongly does her alienation exhibit the world's madness compacted into the solitude of an individual madness. Thus do the wounds of an individual neurosis connect with the universality of the human condition, making the Sartrean subject a hybrid being, half man, half woman, charged with embodying the intermittent figures of desire and revolt. And it is at this limit point that she encounters the great listener, Freud.

Sartre wanted Marilyn Monroe to play Cecily in the movie. She would indeed have been magnificent starring opposite Montgomery Clift as Freud. Huston had already cast them together in *The Misfits*.<sup>40</sup> In some respects the relation between Marilyn Monroe and psychoanalysis could

itself have been made into a film focused on what Freudianism became in American society in the 1950s rather than on the nocturnal splendor of its origins. At the same time that John Huston was trying to bring to life a Freud divided between existential doubt and access to the truth, his heirs who had immigrated to the United States had turned into servants of a psychology of normality utterly unconnected to the great Viennese drama reinvented by Sartre.

Marilyn Monroe was first analyzed by Margaret Hohenberg beginning in 1954, at a time when she was using and abusing sedatives and sleeping pills freely provided by various doctors. Three years later Marilyn decided to try a different analyst's couch. She had just married Arthur Miller, who was himself in analysis with the brilliant Rudolph Loewenstein,<sup>41</sup> and she was advised by Anna Freud to enter analysis with Marianne Kris.

Personal history and family genealogy conspired to make Marianne Kris the daughter, so to speak, of psychoanalysis, and the direct heir of the saga of its origins that Huston wanted to film. Her father, Oskar Rie, had been Freud's partner in the game of tarot in Vienna, and her mother was the sister of Ida Bondy, Breuer's former patient and Fliess's wife. Settling first in London and then in New York, Marianne Kris had become the guardian of the official historiography of Freudianism in the 1950s.

There is no doubt that her influence caused Marilyn to refuse to play the role of Cecily, although she said she was delighted to be offered the part by Huston. The fact is that Anna Freud disapproved of the project and had let her friend Kris know as much.<sup>42</sup> Overwhelmed by the difficulty of Marilyn's treatment, and evidently incapable of managing it correctly, Marianne Kris asked Ralph Greenson, who had settled in Santa Monica after his training on the couch of Otto Fenichel, to take charge of Marilyn during his visits to Hollywood. Greenson accepted and immediately sent her to one of his colleagues to receive prescription medicines by injection; nor did he hesitate to give her strong doses of psychoactive drugs of every kind himself. Characterizing her as "borderline, a paranoid drug addict, and a schizophrenic," he tried to convince her to

give up the acting profession and her love affairs. Worse, he convinced her to hire as her housekeeper a certain Eunice Murray, a woman with ties to the Jehovah's Witnesses who soon began administering so called substitution treatments to Marilyn.

Drug-dependent and subjected to pressure from various psychoanalysts, themselves in difficulty and terrified at the thought that she might commit suicide, Marilyn drifted into a disastrous state of seclusion that led her to suicide. In August 1962, two months after the tragedy, Anna Freud consoled Greenson, who had sunk into depression: "I am horribly saddened about Marilyn Monroe. I know exactly what you are feeling. . . . One tries and tries in one's head to think how one might have done better, and that leaves a terrible feeling of defeat. But you should know that in these cases I think that we really are defeated by something stronger than we are, compared to which analysis, with all its powers, is too feeble a weapon. When I read in the papers that she had lived with twelve foster families, it made me think of the children in the concentration camps whom we try to treat in our clinic."<sup>43</sup>

Pondering now the impression of strangeness that would have resulted from the onscreen interaction of the two "sacred monsters" of the Hollywood star system, Montgomery Clift and Marilyn Monroe—both haunted by the meanderings of a deadly destiny—one can't help but think that, if the actress's psychoanalysts were unable to forestall her desire for death, they might at least have avoided getting so far lost in the arcana of official history as to be blind to the importance of Huston's project.

As for Sartre, he did not lack boldness, since he dared to situate the scene during which Freud renounced his seduction theory partly in a bordello and partly on a bank of the Danube. In the screenplay, Cecily wanders through Vienna after having made accusations of rape against her father. She goes into a bordello, where Freud comes looking for her in order to take her home in a carriage. It is then that she tells him of the true memory she had repressed since childhood. One day, she relates, she surprised her father embracing her governess and fell downstairs. But when Freud, still believing in the validity of his own theory, shows

his incredulity, she threatens to throw herself into the river. Only then does Freud, in a dramatic volte-face, confess his own error to her in turn. Here is the scene:

FREUD: Cecily, you never wanted to slander your father. It was I who forced you to it. You resisted me for as long as you could.

CECILY: Why did you force me?

FREUD: Because I had deceived myself.<sup>44</sup>

The veritable history of this true “scene” of renunciation is found in the correspondence of the real Freud with the real Fliess. It took place in written form, did not occur between a bordello and the Danube, and did not bring in the challenge of the female condition in so direct a manner. Yet the violence of the theoretical gesture, with the avowal made by one man to another in the privacy of written communication, is analogous to the violence of the nocturnal banquet imagined by Sartre, in which the confession is extracted by a woman from a man, who in this way frees her from her fetters by inventing transference.

Here, in the translation of Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, are some portions of the letter of 21 September 1897—called the “equinox letter”—so often commented upon by historians of Freudianism:<sup>45</sup>

I no longer believe in my *neurotica* [theory of the neuroses]. This is probably not intelligible without an explanation; after all, you yourself found credible what I was able to tell you. So I will begin historically [and tell you] where the reasons for disbelief came from. The continual disappointment in my efforts to bring a single analysis to a real conclusion; the running away of people who for a period of time had been most gripped [by analysis]; the absence of the complete successes on which I had counted; the possibility of explaining to myself the partial successes in other ways, in the usual fashion—this was the first group. Then the surprise that in all cases, the *father*, not excluding my own, had to be accused of being perverse—the realization of the unexpected frequency

of hysteria, with precisely the same conditions prevailing in each, whereas surely such widespread perversions against children are not very probable. . . . Then, third, the certain insight that there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect. . . . Fourth, the consideration that in the most deep-reaching psychosis the unconscious memory does not break through, so that the secret of childhood experiences is not disclosed even in the most confused delirium. . . . [T]o be cheerful is everything! I could indeed feel quite discontent. The expectation of eternal fame was so beautiful, as was that of certain wealth, complete independence, travels, and lifting the children above the severe worries that robbed me of my youth. Everything depended upon whether or not hysteria would come out right. Now I can once again remain quiet and modest, go on worrying and saving. A little story from my collection occurs to me: "Rebecca, take off your gown; you are no longer a bride."<sup>46</sup>

The version of this letter available to Sartre in 1958 is as incomplete as the account of it given by Jones. For one thing, it omits the passage in which Freud incriminates his father, who had died eleven months previously,<sup>47</sup> and the whole concluding part in which he details, not without humor, the glorious situation that would have been his had his false theory been proven accurate. Now, Sartre reestablishes the truth in an almost excessive fashion. Making wonderful use of chronology—the death of Jakob precedes Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory—he shows that Freud renounced his error too late to have had time to make peace with his father, upon whom the famous suspicion of seduction still weighs. So the only solution remaining for him is a "Freudian" one: posthumous reconciliation with the symbolic figure of paternity, which will lead him to elaborate the idea of the superego.

In other words, in the screenplay Sartre was playing the card of a Freudian Freud against himself, the better to demonstrate that in Sartrean terms the acceptance of such a figure and such a notion is impos-

sible. Doubtless it was because he had invented this Freud, conforming rigorously to the reality of the history of Freudianism, that he freed himself from the doctrinal superego of his own existential Freudo-Marxism, which was hampering his writing, his autobiography, and the completion of his great work on Flaubert.

The Sartrean act of liberation could then be expanded in *The Words*, in the course of a vehement diatribe by the narrator against his father literally marked by Freud's action in renouncing the seduction theory. But instead of a reconciliation with the symbolic figure of the dead father, this act leads the narrator to a radical anti-Freudianism that, in the form of a refusal of the superego and its theory, expresses the major thesis of Sartre's philosophy with complete coherence: the access to liberty lies in refusal of the moral law and the annihilation of oneself in the other.

The death of Jean-Baptiste was the central moment of my life. It put my mother back in fetters and gave me liberty. There is no good father, that is the rule; we ought not to reproach human beings, but rather the bond of parenthood, which is rotten. There is nothing better than making children; *having* them is a great iniquity. Had he lived, my father would have lain upon me at his full length, and would have crushed me. By chance he died young. Amid all the Aeneases bearing Anchises on their backs I pass from one bank to the other, alone and hating these invisible progenitors who sit astride their sons throughout their lifetimes. I left behind me a man who died young, who did not have time to be my father, and who today might be my child. Was this a good or an evil? I do not know; but I willingly accept the verdict of an eminent psychoanalyst: I have no superego.<sup>48</sup>

A reading of *Nausea* first, then *The Words*, and finally the *Freud* screenplay shows clearly that, if Sartre found a way to link the philosophy of concepts and the philosophy of the subject, he also found a way to embody in fiction a conceptuality that would never have attained such incandescence if it had only been conveyed in works of pure philosophy. But doubtless Sartre *also* had to be a philosopher to be capable in this

way of making intimate obsessions that are never the pure illustration of a system of thought leap forth in his works of fiction. In *The Words* he wrote: “I was Roquentin, I depicted the warp of my own life in him, with no softening. At the same time I was myself, the chosen one, the analyst of hell. . . . Phony to the core, and mystified, I joyfully wrote about our unhappy condition. Dogmatic, I doubted all save that I was the chosen one of doubt. I restored with one hand what I destroyed with the other, and I regarded uneasiness as the guarantee of my security. I was happy.”<sup>49</sup>

In this respect, this paradoxical and uneasy autobiography is one of the high points of twentieth-century literature. It pulverizes the rhetoric of intimate recital and of what is today called by the flat term “autofiction.” With its purified and almost mystical style, this text, written entirely in the *passé simple* verb tense, as if the narrator were regarding his own birth, life, and death from the vantage point of the hell in which he has sunk his pen, or from that childhood which he exposes to public ridicule—this text impresses itself on the reader’s unconscious, causing a symphony of signifiers to vibrate inside him, penetrating him in a strange and almost vampiresque fashion.

Sartre’s *Words* is somehow fragments of memory, or portions of books, that direct every subject back to whatever consciousness she may have of her relation to herself and the world. And in this sense, in its quest for a ceaselessly interrupted subjectivity, this Sartrean autobiography, stripped clean of any tincture of the novelistic, bears a striking resemblance to a Freudian odyssey, with its origins in dreaming, its destiny in language, and its narrative support in nothingness. It is also the prototype of every first-person recital. This is why no one can read it without immediately yielding to the desire for a writing of the self repeated to infinity.

An astonishing reversal of “the childhood of a leader” and a fantastic exorcism!<sup>50</sup> Like many of Sartre’s projects, the *Freud* screenplay remained unfinished, primarily because Sartre and Huston were unable to produce a collaborative work. Moreover, there exist several versions of the text, and many still-unpublished drafts. The main reason, though, is that, once he withdrew his name from the film credits, Sartre tended to

regard this interminable work as something of a castoff, good for nothing but a boost to his bank balance. When he was asked “were there works that you wrote primarily to earn money?” Sartre replied: “There were. I can think of one in any case. It was the *Freud* screenplay I wrote for Huston. I had just found out that I had no more money. I think it was when my mother had given me twelve million old francs to pay my taxes. They were paid, and I had no more debts, but I didn’t have a sou either. Just then I was told that Huston wished to see me. He came round one morning and said, ‘I am offering you 25 million to collaborate on a film about Freud.’ I said yes and I got 25 million.”<sup>51</sup>

From the point of view of the history of psychoanalysis, the Sartrean exorcism had the effect of desacralizing the body of Freud. Reading this screenplay twenty years after it was written (unfortunately it was published posthumously) and a century after the birth of Sartre, one is struck by the way it manages to free the real Freud from the rigid repetition of official history. If examples are needed, I could cite the admirable scenes in which Sartre makes the protagonist confront the hysterical woman’s desire and then the Sartrean demon of transgression, or his portrayal of the moment at which Freud renounces sexual desire in order to gratify one stronger still: the desire to elucidate the sexual causes of desire. Never had any commentator on the Viennese saga succeeded so well in eroticizing the gesture with which Freud advances from error toward truth.

In choosing to show Freud at the moment at which he accomplishes the theoretical gesture that opens up the domain of the unconscious to modern thought, Sartre contradicts his own thesis, posited in *Being and Nothingness* and then in *Questions of Method*, to the effect that psychoanalysis has neither principle nor theoretical grounding. You could put it this way: through a Freud more Freudian than the original, Sartre in part renounces his own former anti-Freudian philosophical stance, and links a conceptual moment to an act of subjective liberty. Only in part, though, because this renunciation leads him to an even more radical anti-Freudianism, in which the only thing that counts is the welling up of a free and creative subject, stripped of any form of superego. This explains why, every time the question of psychoanalysis was raised, he tended to