



## Becoming Freud: The Making of a Psychoanalyst

*Adam Phillips*

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*Becoming Freud* is the story of the young Freud—Freud up until the age of fifty—that incorporates all of Freud's many misgivings about the art of biography. Freud invented a psychological treatment that involved the telling and revising of life stories, but he was himself skeptical of the writing of such stories. In this biography, Adam Phillips, whom the *New Yorker* calls Britain's foremost psychoanalytical writer," emphasizes the largely and inevitably undocumented story of Freud's earliest years as the oldest—and favored—son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and suggests that the psychoanalysis Freud invented was, among many other things, a psychology of the immigrant—increasingly, of course, everybody's status in the modern world.

Psychoanalysis was also Freud's way of coming to terms with the fate of the Jews in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So as well as incorporating the writings of Freud and his contemporaries, *Becoming Freud* also uses the work of historians of the Jews in Europe in this significant period in their lives, a period of unprecedented political freedom and mounting persecution. Phillips concludes by speculating what psychoanalysis might have become if Freud had died in 1906, before the emergence of a psychoanalytic movement over which he had to preside.

## Becoming Freud: The Making of a Psychoanalyst Details

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## From Reader Review Becoming Freud: The Making of a Psychoanalyst for online ebook

### M. Sarki says

Cory Taylor first introduced me to Adam Phillips in her outstanding memoir titled *Dying: A Memoir*. Now having read several titles by Adam Phillips I have become enamored of his writing and personality. Unfortunately this book was more in the spirit of scientific history, specifically psychoanalysis, and he left me out in left field disappointed. Early on in the book Phillips teased me with the idea that Freud, though having six children with his perpetually parturient wife, was possibly more interested in the young men he gathered around him. But nothing more was noted and I question why Phillips suggested homoerotic behavior and then proceeded to never touch on the subject again. Not only did Phillips leave me hanging he also managed to bore me almost to death.

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### Jeff says

"Freud begins to tell his story about psychoanalysis -- a story, as we have seen, that begins to crystallize in the 1880s -- by describing the child's ambition for survival as a quest for pleasure. And pleasure involved the regulation of feelings that always threaten to overwhelm." (122)

Phillips' book is a thick description, but every time he uses this tendentious phrasing -- "his story about psychoanalysis" -- you'd think he's bucking for a Ken Burns-type of popular mausoleum-ization of Freud's contribution to modern life. Phillips thinks psychoanalysis was a science for outsiders, which means no kind of science at all. Nor does he think psychoanalysis should be a science -- he's very plain about that. But to re-domesticate what psychoanalysis was to the literary tradition seems not quite right either. It seems, like so much of the book, an over-determinate reading. Phillips focuses on the Freud of *Interpreting Dreams* [1899], a strange translation from the German title, and one that I've not seen on either of the two English translations I'm familiar with, nor does Phillips use it consistently throughout the book.

Nits aside, the reading is scrupulously historicized, and Phillips gets that everything from life-writing to the counter-culture is implied by Freud's critique of Catholic deployment of the sexual. Phillips is not telling the story of Freudianism so much as telling the story of Freud's early work in a highly self-conscious, Freudian way. This will not be a book for those who look to inter Freud in contemporary theory. I'm still amazed at the *cultural cut* in *The Interpretation*. In trying to recuperate their dream lore, Freud offered a spiritual integrity to his (typically Jewish) patients' inner lives. I don't see how such an investment in the vernacular and its speakers can be over-estimated. For me it makes Freud one of the few enough heroes of the modern.

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### Baris Balcio glu says

Ben Türkçesini okudum. Çevirisi bence çok güzeldi. Katakomb sözcü?ünü Frans?zcadan ö?renmi?tim, Türkçede de o ?ekilde kullan?l?yormu?. Terapötik sözcü?ü de de?i?ikti. Çeviri güzel olmas?na kar??n kitab? zor okudu?umu söylemeliyim. Philips, Freud'u onun dü?üncelerini kullanarak anlatmak istemi?. Yani Freud bir ?ekilde biyografiye kar??ym??, böyle neden sonuç ili?kisi içinde ilerleyen, zaman dizini izleyen biyografilere filan. Bir de kitap onun fiyakal? ?ngiliz üniversitelerinde yapt??? konu?malar asl?nda.

Dinleseydim bir de onu kim bilir ne olurdu. Yani çok yaz?nsal olmu? ba?ka ?eylere bakmay? tercih etmemiz. Ama genel olarak somut bilgi az. Hepimiz göçmeniz, psikanaliz de göçmenleri mi inceliyorum? neymi?. Ama as?l ac?lar?m?zdan zevk al?yor olmam?z, onlar? b?rakmamak için onlara bakmak yerine Bir de Freud'un ne kadar ç?a? açan birisi oldu?unu anlasak da çok ele?tirildi?ini de bildi?imden oturup da bahsedilen kitaplar?n? okumak içimden gelmedi. Zaten ondan yap?lan al?nt?lar da anlamas? zor al?nt?lard?. Ama kendini denemek isteyenler bu kitab? okumal?.

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### **Joni says**

"a catalogue of modern griefs"

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### **Elif Okan Gezmi? says**

Öncelikle, derli toplu bir Freud biyografisi okumak isteyenler için do?ru bir kitap olmayacakt?r bu. Adam Phillips bütünlüklü bir hikaye anlatmak yerine Freud'un ya?am?ndan onun dü?üncesinin geli?iminde önem ta??d??na inand??? noktalar? seçip bunlar üstünden bir tart??ma yürütmü?. Dolay?s?yla bu kitap asl?nda Freud'un ya?am öyküsü ile dü?üncesi aras?ndaki ili?kiye getirilmi? bir Adam Phillips yorumu diyebiliriz. Phillips kitapta çokça tekrara dü?mü?, biraz da??n?k bir seyir izlemi? ve i?in asl? dile getirdi?i görü?lerin ç?o?u Freud üzerine yaz?lan kitaplar? s?k? takip edenlere hiç de yabanc? de?il. Bu bak?mdan, Adam Phillips isminden çok daha fazlas?n? bekledi?imden belki, kitap benim için bir miktar hayal k?r?kl?yyd? diyebilirim.

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### **Damla says**

4 puan? öncelikle Adam Phillips'in ak?c? ve aç?klay?c? diline veriyorum. Psikolojiye, psikanalize ve Freud'a ilgisi çok az olan biri olarak benim için çok doyurucu bir çal??mayd?. Dönemin siyasi, toplumsal özelliklerini görmek ve psikanaliz olu?um sürecine bu pencereden bakmak son derece keyifliydi.

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### **Greg Newkirk says**

#### **Freud Clarified?**

Phillips, like Freud, is a little opaque. Fortunately he is opaque in a different enough way to shed some light on Freud before slipping into the occult practice of one person defining another. Perhaps the best thing he revealed about Freud was his own neurosis, his pathological controlling of his own history. Phillips is also correct that Freud would have left a better legacy had he died after publishing his first 5 books. We could have used our own imagination rather than getting sucked into Freud's neurosis. It is one thing to describe what we see. It is another to define it.

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### **Paul Johnston says**

This is a fantastic book. It is certainly no conventional biography - more a meditation on biography and an account of Freud that says as much about Phillips as about Freud. Phillips believes that there are aspects of what he discovered that even Freud found disturbing and that some of his post-1906 writings were a rowing back or a covering up. He certainly thinks that the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis turned it from something that sought to recognise and release the paradoxical nature of our wishing to a new form of distorting and reassuring knowledge that promised to make sure that even the unconscious was kept within proper boundaries. Whatever one thinks of this view, Phillips is a pleasure to read and deeply thought-provoking. It is certainly the best book of his I have read and one I think he will have difficulty surpassing.

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### **Steve says**

A dense, complex look at early Freud. At times frustratingly repetitive & convoluted, but for the most part this is a fascinating study, not for the beginner, but for the reader with genuine interest in Freud (and some experience of his writings).

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### **Henry Berry says**

I was interested in this book because of my belief that unawareness of psychology—in many cases, tantamount to ignorance of it—along with at best bare knowledge or acknowledgement of history accounts largely for the weakness and decline of the U.S. Failure to recognize psychology and history so as to govern decision-making for shaping action results in madcap activities little different from antics—but one characterization of the decade-long U.S. commotion in Iraq and Afghanistan. So I was interested in this book to see if or how the author might make Freud relevant to today's miasmas and as some idea or answer whatever its angle or content for reintroducing the factor—unavoidable factor—of psychology to today's society and its politics and policies.

The book did not disappoint, and in fact exceeded by a good deal expectations I had of it, expectations raised by its author's longtime interests and credentials. As well as the general editor of new translations of Freud's works as a part of the Penguin Modern Classics, Phillips has worked as a hospital and private psychoanalyst in England and is a visiting professor of English at the University of York. He does recurringly imply or to a lesser extent, state the relevance of psychology to the contemporary world while following and analyzing the early years of Freud's career, up to 1906. "If Freud had died in 1906, we would...have been left with...the rudiments of, rather than prescriptions for, the practice of psychoanalysis."

As for insights into what Freud was doing in this stage of his career—as opposed to the illuminating commentary exemplified in the foregoing quote—Phillips writes, "Psychoanalysis was becoming in Freud's writing in these years the artful science of our false senses of security. Freud was discovering how modern people endangered themselves by the ways in which they protected themselves. Each of the so-called mechanisms of defense was an unconscious form of self-blinding; ways of occluding a piece of reality." Such insights could apply to the conflicts of the First World War as to the US thrashing about in the Middle East which has spawned manifold threats and countless enemies in the name of security. Psychology is permanent in Humankind.

Another insight regarding psychoanalysis as developed by Freud reads, "[W]hat Freud was interested in in these crucial years was not just the all-too-familiar, all-too-human imperious urgency of sex, but how the body becomes...its language; how culture is the translation...of the body's unconscious, forbidden desire, the desire a person believes he can't afford to acknowledge. Freud was not returning sexuality to its 'rightful share,' but working out what that share might be." This quote relates to the correct, but limited view of Freud as moving from the sexual repressions of the Victorian age, which is to a considerable degree what the movement of modernism is. But it also plainly takes in LGTB, fashion, advertising, sexting, agitation on college campuses concerning rape, and other explicitly and inherently sexual phenomena and issues of today.

The content of the book progresses cumulatively with Freud taking on both depth and dimension. How Freud individually and to some extent idiosyncratically pursues and develops his interests melds with interaction with various friends and associates and with different places, notably Paris. Key writings, particularly "Studies on Hysteria" written with Josef Breuer, are looked into as both summations and entrances. Origins of theory are recognized, and clinical activity described. But even more important than all this in Freud becoming Freud, the author tenders, was his experiences and observations as a father and husband. "Freud had six children in eight years" between his formative years of 1886 to 1900. Being married and being a father of several young children while endeavoring to establish himself as a psychoanalyst and earn a reputation cannot but make an impression and create effects. That all the case studies of "Studies on Hysteria" were women and the Oedipus complex is a major, central tenet of the field of psychology go to support Phillips' idea that Freud's family life was the source of psychoanalysis. Freud's education, friendships, professional associations, social environment, and other areas of his life brought embellishments or refinements to Freud's insights and concepts derived largely from his family life.

Referring to these years of the first period of his married life with six young children, Phillips relates, "It is, perhaps, unsurprising that in these years Freud was beginning to really think about people's connections with each other, about what they exchanged, and wanted to exchange and failed to exchange with each other; about, in short, sexuality and development and loss." The light the author casts on Freud's family life makes perfect sense when you think about it. The family life accounts more than anything else for Freud's general orientation and also for the genesis and to a considerable extent the scenarios and specifics of the psychology Freud worked out.

One could go on. Nearly every page and many paragraphs of the book merit thought, study, and reflection. Phillips' "Becoming Freud" reaffirms the value of psychology; and for ones who tend to dismiss or ignore it, the book conveys psychology's irreplaceable relevance and inestimable worth. The book is an outstanding knowledgeable and sympathetic comprehension of the towering, pervasive Freud who more than any other individual reflects and influences the culture of modernism.

(The reviewer is the author of MASSACRE IN NEWTOWN - ADAM LANZA'S DARK PASSAGE TO MADNESS.)

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### **Robert says**

Becoming Freud by Adam Phillips is an exceptionally interesting biography about a man whom I had put aside some time ago, having read most of his work and discussed him sufficiently to think I was done with him. Phillips, a psychoanalyst and writer/editor, takes a uniquely thoughtful approach to Freud, however. He recognizes that Freud himself had little time for biography in the sense that biography is something we all choose about ourselves. We have many biographies and decide which one works best, discarding irrelevant

material and highlighting what we take to be the essential. This gives us the birth of today's trope "the narrative," as in Obama's narrative and Oprah's narrative and so forth.

As a practitioner and man of letters, Phillips homes in on Freud's rich contradictions. Yes, sexuality plays a determinative role in Freudian thought, but beyond that we enter a world of representations, diversions, symptoms, jokes and dreams, all of us struggling with two fundamental things: need and desire. In a sense this is the human evolution of Darwinian evolution, the way we humans do it. Freud struggled early in his career to be part of what we now call "hard science," the process of discovering universal facts that can be reconfirmed through subsequent experimentation. He became a doctor for this reason, but late in his life, he wryly commented that he hadn't much use for his medical degree and hadn't been much of a doctor.

The problem with Freud (and Jung and many others) is that he saw relatively few patients, each of whom was incomparable, so he had no way of testing his findings except through observation. And then he stopped trying to test findings because his observations proved sufficient for the enveloping theories he constructed. Phillips deals with this issue head-on. We're a hundred years into true brain science, but the matter of a human body is easier to confirm than interpret, and here is where Freud excelled, using language ("the talking cure") to probe what language conceals . . . or letting the patient achieve that end.

Phillips writes subtly. Sometimes he is so subtle and precise that the book is slow going, but always interesting. He spends time on "the dog that didn't bark." Freud wrote little about his wife, for example. That's a dog that didn't bark. Or his six children, six puppies who didn't bark. But he was a man so focused on his work that he not only paid them as little attention as possible but also played no role in the intellectual/artistic world of Vienna, sticking to his patients and his writing.

For me one of the key sentences in the book is Freud's view that we don't live so much in culture as culture lives in us—and therefore each of us has problems fitting culture's demands within our needs and desires. Culture is a generality. We are specific. Our lives, shorn of overarching religious interpretation in a secular world, therefore require multiple forms of narrative construction, sometimes contradictory, and our narratives inevitably change somewhat as we move through the life cycle. The fact that our awareness is greater than our immediate consciousness is obvious to us; we pick up more than we know. Thank Freud for that. When we joke, we are attempting to make unacceptable views acceptable. Thank Freud for that. When we dream, we are redescribing the previous day's events and also demonstrating, though our fantastic imagery and bizarre stories, tremendous artistic powers, hard to understand and harder to access and employ when we are awake. Thank Freud for that.

Phillips follows Freud through his most productive psychoanalytic phase up to age fifty. After that Freud began applying his interpretations to broader life matters—"Civilization and Its Discontents," for example. Phillips makes the canny point, however, that if Freud had died at fifty, he'd still be a foundational thinker. And he was—a thinker, a philosopher, a mind in search of meaning more than facts.

If you're still interested in Freud, this is a good book to read. If you're not still interested in Freud, it's also a good book to read. I'd like to know Adam Phillips. The quotes he places at the head of his chapters, for example, demonstrate exceptional breadth of knowledge and wide reading. They alone would merit a few hours discussion.

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## Gürkan says

Adam Phillips, XIX. ve XX. yüzyılların en tartışmalı dahilerinden biri olan Sigmund Freud'un en az bilinen hayat konusunu sislerini arıyor. Freud'un hayatı ilk 50 yılının (1856-1906) anlatan Phillips, okuyuculara Freud'un hislerini, isteklerini ve yaşımlarını Psikanalizin oluşturmasıyla nasıl bir simbiyoz kurduğunu mufassal bir biçimde aktarıyor. E.Brücke'den tutun da J. Breuer'le olan ilişkisine kadar onunla alakalı hiç duyulmamış enstanceleri açıklayan bir dille yazmış. Böyle bir önemli eseri dilimize

### **Simon says**

This biography was truly a pleasure to read. Phillips gives us an insightful reflection on the life and work of Freud. It doesn't even seem like a biography, but an essay about the concept of biography itself. He gives very solid and clear explanations of the psychoanalytical concept, which I appreciate in a writer. Phillips presents what he has to say in a simple but powerful way which makes him an excellent teacher. Before I looked the book up on Goodreads I didn't know that this book was actually part of a series on Jewish lives. I was already wondering why Phillips dedicates as much time as he does to Freud's Jewishness. I did find this a welcome change, however. Biographies of Freud tend to forgive his religious upbringing, which undoubtedly had an impact on him. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in psychoanalysis, Freud or philosophy.

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### **Dpdwyer says**

More detail than I was looking for, but Phillips can always be counted on for thought provoking quotes and epigrams:

“Because we want to like our facts we are always tempted to simplify them.”

“There is nothing we want to protect ourselves from more, in Freud’s view, than our personal and family histories.”

“What Freud increasingly found most difficult to cure in his patients was their (mostly unconscious) wish not to be cured.”

Freud’s believed psychoanalysis could only “transform hysterical misery into ordinary human unhappiness.”

“All history, for Freud, is the rewriting of history because the past is something we rewrite to make a future for ourselves.”

“...people grow into their past, Freud realized, more than they grow out of it.”

“Childhood was a story adults make up about themselves.”

“Just as he was starting a family himself [Freud] was discovering....that childhood was a cumulative trauma loop in which the child has to make her appetites at once known and compatible with family life.”

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## **Charlie Parramore says**

Reading this book made me realize how Freud was so glossed over in my college classes and how his ideas are so consistently presented as outdated and wrong minded. What I realized in reading this book is that what psychoanalysis really tries to get at is what lies at the basis of our humanity below all the trappings we hide ourselves in so that we can function in our modern civilization.

The author also makes the point that psychoanalysis in the Freudian sense is by its nature a counter-cultural interest as it is concerned with what lies behind and below society rather than of it.

I found this fresh view of Freud to be very fascinating.

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