

Bertha's Painful Love

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The theme of the upcoming Congress drew my attention to a more hidden aspect, the unexpected mishaps which occurred within the creation of psychoanalysis, and the discovery of transference.

During his 1909 visit to the United States, Freud attributed the honour and credit for the creation of psychoanalysis not solely to himself but also to Dr. Breuer, who “first applied this method in the case of a young woman suffering from hysteria, during the years 1880–1882”.¹

It was Freud's unwavering determination to bring the message of psychoanalysis to the world that rescued the exemplary case of Anna O. from being lost in the discreet twilight zone of painful loves. The exposure of Anna O's identity as Bertha Pappenheim by Ernest Jones in 1953², enabled researchers to explore her clinical condition after her treatment ended under circumstances shrouded in scandal.³ Later clinical reports revealed a severe deterioration in her condition, leading to a long hospitalisation. So dire was her state that Dr. Breuer reportedly wished for her death to deliver her from her suffering.⁴

This exposure also allowed for an exploration of Bertha's impressive achievements in later years as a social activist, feminist, pioneering social worker in the Jewish community in Germany, and prolific writer. Recently, I encountered a collection entitled *Little Stories for Children (Kleine Geschichten für Kinder)* that she wrote shortly after her treatment with Dr. Breuer –published anonymously in 1888.⁵ These stories, crafted in the same style as the plots she wove during the "talking cure" sessions, present her "private theatre", and give an authentic testimony of her desires and passions, her forbidden and painful love, also for her to desire to have children. It also laid bare the satisfaction she derived from the "chimney sweeping" – the nickname she made for the Cathartic Method – and the agony she experienced after it ended.

In Seminar XI, Lacan references Anna O's case as a gesture on the crucial discovery of transference, and following Freud, as evidence of the sexual reality of the unconscious.⁶ He does not overlook the exceptional circumstances of the end of the treatment, using it to distinguish between Breuer's desire and the desire of an analyst.

1. Freud, S., “On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement” (1914), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol XIV*. London: Hogarth Press. 1963, p.7.

2 Jones, A., *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, London: Penguin, 1953. p 144.

3 Albrecht Hirschmuller presented those clinical reports in his book *Physiology and Psychoanalysis: The Life and Work of Josef Breuer*, New York: New York University Press, 1989.

4. Jones, E., *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Penguin, 1964, pp. 144-145.

5. Pappenheim, B., *Kleine Geschichten für Kinder*, Karlsruhe : Braun, 1888.

6. Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, Norton 1977, pp. 157-160.

The desire of an analyst, though not meant to be pure, serves also as a crucial safeguard, preventing transference from sliding down the slippery slope of painful love.