

**FREUD'S FIRST PUBLISHED CONFESSION
TO BEING A MURDER MANIAC:
THE CAIN-COMPLEX CONFESSION,
SERIAL & MASS MURDER**

The extended indented text cited below is from, *Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams*, Translated from the German by James Strachey, Avon Books, New York, New York, 1965—V.1 The Dream Work, G. Intellectual Activity in Dreams, p. 495

Freud recounts a dream about a man he declares to have identified with as a diagnosed homicidal maniac:

The dream changes its scene so often, and without making the slightest objection to such changes, that it would not have seemed at all remarkable had I at one from my memories, replaced my travelling companions by more agreeable persons. But here was a case where something or other opposes the change of scene, and finds it necessary to explain it. How did I suddenly get into another compartment? I could not positively remember having changed carriages. So there was only one explanation: *I might have left the carriage while asleep—an unusual occurrence, examples of which, however, are known to neuropathologist. We know of persons who undertake railway journeys in a crepuscular state, without betraying their abnormal condition by any sign whatever, until at some stage of their journey they come to themselves, and are surprised by the gap in their memory. Thus, while I am still dreaming, I declare my own case to be such a case of automatisme ambulateur. [i.e., the homicidal maniac sleep-walker, referenced by Freud]*

Analysis permits of another solution. The attempt at explanation, which so surprises me I am to attribute it to the dream-work, is not original, but is copied from the neurosis of one of my patients. I have already spoken in another chapter of a highly cultured and kindly man who began, shortly after the death of his parents, to accuse himself of

murderous tendencies, and who was distressed by the precautionary measures which he had to take to secure himself against these tendencies. His was a case of severe obsessional idea with full insight. To begin with, it was painful to him to walk through the streets, as he was obsessed by the necessity of accounting for all the persons he had to know whither they had disappeared; if one of them suddenly eluded his pursuing glance, he was left with a feeling of distress and the idea that he might possibly have made away with the man. Behind this obsessive idea was concealed, among other things, a Cain-fantasy, for 'all men are brothers'. Owing to the impossibility of accomplishing this task, he gave up going for walks, and spent his life imprisoned within his four walls. But reports of murders which had been committed in the world outside were constantly reaching his room by way of the newspapers, and his conscience tormented him with the doubt that he might be the murderer for whom the police were looking. The certainty that he had not left the house for weeks protected him for a time against these accusations, until one day there dawned upon him the possibility that *he might have left his house while in an unconscious state*, and might thus have committed the murder without knowing anything about it. From that time onwards he locked his front door, and gave the key to his old housekeeper, strictly forbidding her to give it into his hands, even if he demanded it.

This, then, is the origin of the attempted explanation that I may have changed carriages while in an unconscious state; it has been taken into the dream ready-made, from the material of the dream-thoughts, and is evidently intended to identify me with the person of my patient. My memory of this patient was awakened by natural association. My last night journey had been made a few weeks earlier in his company. He was cured, and we were going into the country together to his relatives, who had sent for me; as we had a compartment to ourselves, we left all the windows open throughout the night, and for as long as I remained awake we had a most interesting conversation. I knew that

hostile impulses towards his father in childhood, in a sexual connection, had been at the root of his illness. By identifying myself with him I wanted to make an analogous confession to myself. The second scene of the dream really resolves itself into a wanton fantasy to the effect that my two elderly travelling companions had acted so uncivilly towards me because my arrival on the scene had prevented them from exchanging kisses and embraces during the night, as they had intended. This fantasy, however, goes back to an early incident of my childhood when, probably impelled by sexual curiosity, I had intruded into my parents' bedroom, and was driven thence by my father's emphatic command.

I think it would be superfluous to multiply such examples. They would all confirm what we have learned from those already cited: namely, that an act of judgment in a dream is merely the repetition of an original act of judgment in the dream-thoughts. In most cases it is an unsuitable repetition, fitted into an inappropriate context; occasionally, however, as in our last example, it is so artfully applied that it may almost give one the impression of independent intellectual activity in the dream. At this point we might turn our attention to that psychic activity which, though it does not appear to co-operate constantly in the formation of dreams, yet endeavours to fuse the dream-elements of different origin into a flawless and significant whole. We consider it necessary, however, first of all to consider the expressions of affect which appear in dreams, and to compare these with the affects which analysis discovers in the dream-thoughts.

[underlines added to text]