

WAS FREUD A MURDERER?

by Dr. Paul Scagnelli on The Importance of Eric Miller's Work

[The following text is excerpted from Dr. Paul Scagnelli's *Deadly Dr. Freud* (1994), A Commentary Chapter on Eric Miller's Work, *Passion For Murder: The Homicidal Deeds of Dr. Sigmund Freud*, 1984. Comments by myself, Eric Miller, are in separate paragraphs, in italic"]

Was Freud a Murderer?

As this book will show, there are many reasons why loyal Freudians would want to keep a lid on Renée Gicklhorn's data about criminality in the Freud family. In general, their intent is to suppress or ignore any material that could seriously harm Freud's reputation with the public and, particularly, with leading figures in the social sciences whose support is valuable to Psychoanalysis,

However, I suspect that there is a special unconscious reason why eminent psychoanalysts might wish to cover up Gicklhorn's data. Freud' supporters may harbor a gnawing concern that there are connection between criminal activities of the Freuds and the question of whether two of the most important persons in Sigmund's childhood—his half brother Emanuel and nephew John—were secretly murdered, with Sigmund bearing a special responsibility for those deaths. 1 refer to the very strange death of 81 year-old Emanuel in 1914 when he mysteriously fell from a moving train in England, and the similarly bizarre end of Emanuel's son, John Freud who disappeared from his English home in 1919, at age 64, and was never seen again.

Scagnelli again and again shows either his naiveté or his disingenuousness with his habitual characterizing of Freudians with their "special unconscious reasons" for wanting to hide Freud's criminal family background. In the above, though he characterizes the dishonesty of psychoanalysis, despite relegating their dishonest behavior of concealment of Freud's background because they have a "gnawing concern" about Freud's half-brother, Emanuel and his nephew John and the facts (or suggestion) that both were murdered by Freud. Scagnelli calls Freud's murders as his having a "special responsibility for those deaths"—murder usually does have a "special responsibility" for murder. Scagnelli concluded his remarks above with two bizarre comments, i.e.,, one, that the death of Emanuel at the age of 81 was "very strange" (he simply fell off a train) and a "similarly bizarre" end of John Freud. Scagnelli states as fact, what is not a fact. John Freud did not disappear at age 64, he died at 20 or 21, in July 1875. Scagnelli doesn't know what he is talking about.

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My initial exposure to the thesis that Sigmund Freud had murdered his nephew came from a careful reading of Eric Miller's *Passion for Murder: The Homicidal Deeds of Dr. Sigmund Freud* (1984). I first read Miller's book in 1985, when I had already written a manuscript titled *The Fatal Freud* (unpublished) exploring Freud's destructive behaviors. My thesis was that he helped provoke various suicides, especially of his rivals, and was responsible for the deaths of patients in ways that suggest he was acting-out inner rage and urgent death-wishes.

Scagnelli would have his readers believe that, before reading my work, he had already "written" a manuscript detailing his thesis that Freud "helped provoke various suicides" and "especially of his rivals." And he adds that Freud was responsible for the deaths, in other ways than suicides, ways that he euphemistically calls "acting-out inner rage and urgent death-wishes." Scagnelli can hardly think straight on the issue. To "act out inner rages" and "urgent death-wishes" is just circumlocution for saying Freud had a murderous passion or mania which he could not control and so he became "responsible" for the deaths of a number of his patients.

Since I had investigated aspects of Freud's lethal potentials before reading Miller's book in late 1985, it should have been easy for me to give some credibility to his major thesis: that Freud had deliberately killed several people, including that hated boyhood rival, his nephew John. However, I did not afford credence to Miller's claim that Freud was an actual murderer. Initially, I resisted Miller's thesis for a simple reason. Although my unpublished writings had revealed a number of Freud's lethal behaviors, these were limited to times when he provoked certain persons to commit suicide and killed others by making intemperate prescriptions of drugs. But we cannot classify those acts as murder, even though murderous elements might exist as hidden aspects of Freud's motivations.

Scagnelli would have his readers believe that, though he had just completed a manuscript detailing Freud's murderous behaviors, it was not at all easy to accept my work dealing with Freud's "Homicidal Mania." Scagnelli, simply says he just could not "afford credence to Miller's claim that Freud was an actual murderer." Initially, he resisted my thesis for "a simple reason." Now he tells us what he is really thinking. His manuscript did not deal with Freud's homicidal mania, instead he found that Freud's "lethal behaviors" were limited to times when he provoked "certain persons" to commit suicide and killed others with intemperate prescriptions of drugs. These latter acts, Scagnelli tells us, cannot easily be classified as acts of murder—"even though murderous elements might exist as hidden aspects of Freud's motivations."

Allow me to summarize some central ideas in Miller's book, so that I can explain

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my additional reasons for rejecting his claims that Freud was a murderer. Miller argued that from his earliest childhood years Freud's behaviors, character, fantasies, and dreams had provided his biographers with many indications that he was a homicidal personality. In general, Freud had a secret obsession with the subject of murder. For example, Miller emphasized the topics of patricide and fratricide that permeated many of his works and surfaced in several of his key dreams (the *Non vixit* dream); the numerous identifications Freud made with literary murderers; and the recurrent and powerful death-wishes that he directed toward family members and other persons. In his book, he discussed these lethal factors in Freud's life and career and connected them with instances when he was responsible for killing certain people, including patients and friends, accidentally. Also, Miller cited the time when Freud's closest friend, Wilhelm Fliess, had accused him of planning to murder him during the bitter breakup of their friendship in 1900, at a Tyrol resort.

I have no idea what Scagnelli means that I claim Freud was "responsible for killing certain people, including patients and friends, accidentally." If Freud's killings were "accidental" I certainly wouldn't have indicated they were intentional murders. It doesn't make sense. In the following paragraph Scagnelli continues his confused commentary.

Furthermore, Miller characterized some behaviors as covertly murderous, including instances in the 1880s when Freud encouraged people to overdose with cocaine, which caused the medical community to brand him a "public menace." Miller categorized as covert murders Freud's overdosing of his friend and colleague, Ernst Fleischl von Marxow, and his "incautious prescription" of a deadly dose of Sulphonal to a patient called Mathilde. Also, Miller charged that Freud murdered his disciple, Victor Tausk, and claimed to have evidence for that accusation-contradicting the accepted belief that Tausk committed suicide while embroiled in a very depressing conflict with Freud. The most persistent accusation of covert murder involved Miller's charges concerning the mysterious disappearance of Freud's nephew, John Freud. He insisted that (p. 83) this had occurred circa 1873 when John was 18 and Sigmund was 17.

As to the "most persistent" accusation of covert murder that I make for Freud's murder of John Freud, Scagnelli asserts that I insisted that Freud murdered John in 1973, when John was 17. It is true that on page 83 I asserted that the most probably time that Freud killed John was when he was on a summer vacation to visit his "half-brother" Emanuel's family. It is true I assert that John was probably killed at age 18, in the summer. That would have been 1874. I made an error from the information available to me, I could not find for certainty the date of Freud's trip to Manchester, England, on his summer vacation. Efforts were made, but

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again the information was concealed from me. Requests were made, to the Library of Congress and other sources, but none of them would reveal the information. But, with publication of the Silberstein Letters (1991), the fact could no longer be concealed or hidden. The error I made in my deductions was that Freud had traveled to Manchester, England, in the summer of 1873, rather than 1875. There are a great many details of conflicting information which I'll not go into here, but the simple fact is I was always certain that the time Freud murdered John Freud was on that summer trip whether it be (as Freud himself contradictorily stated) when he was 17, 18, 19, or 20!

Scagnelli's understanding of the facts of the case is completely compromised by his lack of obtaining material evidence of the facts, consulting directly with principles concerned, and a misreading of the record. At another time, or at the prompting of a reader, I'll further address Scagnelli. Let it be said there is a lot of valuable information in his book, it is just that he himself can't discriminate with fact or argument the material facts from unfounded and sometimes bizarre supposition—hence rending his contribution as a whole highly conjectural. The reader is especially cautioned against accepting anything Scagnelli says I said or believe, or stated, unless unquestioned proof is available.

In addition to elaborating upon the preceding accusations, Miller discussed at length his claim that Freud provided many clues to the aforementioned covert murders in his own dreams and dream associations in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and in other writings. While Helen Puner, in her biography of Freud (1949), made the lesser charge that Freud's dream book incorporated a hidden "confession of sins," Miller repeatedly expressed the more extreme viewpoint that we can interpret Freud's "masterpiece" as an ingenious confession of murder, similar to the self-accusing unconscious behaviors of criminals that Prof. Hanns Gross (the father of criminology) had already discovered in the 1880s.

On first reading Miller's book, I was surprised to find another writer, besides myself, who was so aware of Freud's lethal potentials. However, I still could not accept Miller's main thesis that Freud was a deliberate murderer who had killed Victor Tausk, and his nephew John Freud. Roazen's book *Brother Animal* (1969) seemed to offer convincing evidence that Tausk's death was a suicide (accompanied by a note), so I had no reason to accept Miller's claim that Freud "had him murdered" (1984, p. 255), nor that he is privy to unpublished research evidence that amply supports his accusation.

Certainly, I was skeptical about Miller's notion that John Freud had disappeared abruptly around 1873 and that this was because Sigmund had murdered him. Although Miller provided some interesting circumstantial evidence to support his

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claim that Sigmund had exterminated nephew John during their late adolescent years, his thinking placed undue emphasis on one episode that reflected Sigmund's lethal feelings towards John. That incident occurred several years before John's alleged disappearance when he visited Jacob's home in Vienna and evidently Sigmund maneuvered him into doing a duologue in front of his classmates. In this fragment of a play by Schiller, John had taken the role of Julius Caesar and Sigmund took the role of Brutus. One can readily agree with Miller's view--and that of Freud's physician, Max Schur (1972)--that this gambit expressed Sigmund's unending murderous hatred and rivalry toward John. Consider that Brutus had assassinated this emperor named Julius, also the name of Freud's hated younger brother for whom he harbored intense death-wishes. Miller implied that Sigmund's symbolic murder of John (by acting-out Schiller's play), laid the groundwork for the actual murder a few years later.

My primary reason for disbelief was that Miller gave insufficient evidence to support his claim about John Freud's disappearance. His assertion conflicts with evidence that John continued to reside with his family in Manchester until around 1919, as reported by Freud's biographer, Ronald Clark. However, Miller's evidence that John disappeared about 1873 included (pp. 834) a personal communication from Dr. Max Schur's widow, stating that John had disappeared when he was 18 years old. This generally confirms what her husband, Freud's friend and long term physician, wrote in an article in *American Imago*(26: 303-23), when he remarked that John Freud "came to Vienna for a visit in 1870. . . and mysteriously disappeared in 1872."

According to Miller, John's disappearance in 1872 was supported by Freud family genealogy tables, including one kept by Freud's niece, Hella Freud. Also supporting it is a note penned by Fred Hartwig (said to be a relative of the Freud family) which Miller claimed he discovered in the Rylands Library in Manchester, England. Miller contended that the official census report at Manchester in 1881 lists all of Emanuel Freud's family members, and that: "Only John is missing." One could easily reply that perhaps John had moved out on his own to some other locality, at least for several years. But Miller countered with this sweeping statement: "Further independent research established the fact that John was also missing from all other records in England and Wales." (Of course, this ignored Scotland, European nations, Canada, etc.) Finally, Miller cited Emanuel Freud's naturalization papers in 1877, listing all his family members, except John.

Unfortunately, Marianne Krüll offered some brief and vague remarks (1986: pp. 129,234-5,270) which seem to support the idea that John Freud disappeared from his family home in Manchester during the 1870s, as Miller and Schur contended. She stated that the "Freud family tree" (kept in the Freud Archives) contains "a note to the effect that John disappeared when eighteen years old, but gives no further

details." However, that comment seems misleading, for when one consults her book to study the "Jacob Freud Family Tree" (pp. 234-5), there is an alternative notation for John Freud which shows his birth date as 8/13/1855 in Freiberg, but then states: "vanished after 1875 or in 1918." Thus, in her prior citation of that first note, Krüll wrote that it specified that John had disappeared "when eighteen," whereas this second note states "after 1875" (when he was age 20). Moreover, Krüll totally neglected to mention that the most important aspect of this alternative note had added: "or in 1918." Mysteriously, this second notation (whose authority is unknown) indicates that John Freud disappeared either after age 18 or at age 63, in 1918!

Krüll's final remark about this crucial and perplexing issue was that: "In any case, John's disappearance remains unexplained." To my mind, it is amazing—considering that Freud called young John his greatest rival and the template for all his later ambivalent relationships with men—that Krüll did not express her own astonishment that the hordes of Freud's biographers have not tried to clarify the following issues: Did John disappear from the face of the earth in a sudden and unexplained manner?; 2. Did he disappear in the 1870s and/or circa 1918?; 3. What family or personal circumstances surrounded his disappearance, including mental health factors, occupation, address, relationships with others, and living habits?; 4. Did John disappear around 1918 due to a family argument, because he had stolen money from the family business, or because he had become senile and out of touch with reality—and then simply wandered off?

Allow me to explain what caused me to disbelieve Miller's and Max Schur's thesis that John Freud disappeared in the 1870s, and my strong skepticism that Freud had assassinated John when he was 18. To begin with, Miller himself acknowledged that on various occasions after 1874 Freud had written about John in the present tense, indicating that he was still alive (though Miller seemed to regard this as a ruse to throw us off the trail). In a letter dated October 9, 1875 to his friend, Silberstein, Freud mentioned his English nephew, John, and his business acumen, clearly indicating that John was still at home in England at age 20. Then in his letter to Fliess dated October 3, 1897 he referred to his nephew (John) "who is now living in Manchester and who visited us in Vienna when I was fourteen years old." In 1897 John would have been age 42, and it seems inconceivable that Freud would have concocted a blatant lie about John's presence in Manchester in 1897, if he had disappeared decades earlier. Indeed, why would Freud have told such a dangerous lie to Fliess, one that might have been exposed to his friend via various channels?

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1967) [sic, 1900] Freud made several references to the extreme importance of John Freud to his own personal development. For present purposes, the key reference is on page 265 where he mentioned his year-older

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nephew "who was *at present* living in England." (Emphasis mine) Assuming that the original German text specifies the present tense as forcefully as this English translation does, it is obvious that Freud had told the entire world that John was still living in England in 1900.

Finally, in Clark's distinguished biography of Freud (1980) he recounted that in 1919 Freud received a letter from his relatives in England informing him that John Freud had suddenly disappeared. It seems quite strange that the unnamed English relative's letter apparently had nothing further to say about this matter. (Or did Clark withhold some important information from us?). Furthermore, it seems odd "that Clark offered no intimation of Freud's emotional response to the news of John's mysterious disappearance, as if it had no impact on Freud at all, and as if Freud (and Clark) had no further curiosity about the ultimate fate of Sigmund's greatest rival. Most peculiar is the fact that Jones's biographies had nothing to say about the career and fate of John Freud, in the two final volumes.

When Miller reviewed materials indicating that John might have been alive in England decades after the 1870s, he neglected to present Freud's compelling letter to Fliess of October 3, 1897 and the letter in 1919 by Freud's English relative that Clark cited. This seemed to be a grave flaw in Miller's thesis that John had disappeared in the early 1870s, and prompted new skepticism about Miller's idea that Freud had murdered John when the latter Was 18. The fact that Freud had referred to John as alive and kicking in his 1897 letter to Fliess and more so in his dream book, made it clear to me that his nephew must still have resided in England at age 45 in 1900, when the dream book appeared. It was inconceivable to me that Freud would have dared to lie so publicly about a subject that many of his English relatives and their friends could readily have exposed as a falsehood.

Obviously, that reasoning likewise applies to Clark's reporting of the relative's letter advising Freud that John had just disappeared in early 1919, even though Clark's book with this datum was not published until 1980. If that information had been falsified in some manner, why would the Freud family in Manchester-or their relatives and friends-have kept their silence about the matter? (Could a family conspiracy have been operative, pertaining to that old issue of criminality?)

Miller's claim that, after the 1870s, Freud had simply falsified the data about John's continued existence, was not at all convincing, nor was the corollary that John had been murdered at age 18. However, I must admit that there was a more compelling emotional basis for my rejection of Miller's thesis. Despite the fact that for several years before reading Miller's thesis I had been amassing data concerning the dark side of Freud's personality, and was convinced that he had a very noxious personality, I was emotionally incapable of giving real credence to Miller's ideas. That

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was because my initial training as a clinical psychologist at Duke University in the early 1960s had strongly championed the Freudian orientation, and during several years of indoctrination by persuasive mentors, Freud had become a great hero to me. So completely had I absorbed the heroic legends which portrayed Freud as an incomparable humanitarian and ethical giant that, when first exposed to Miller's book, I was unable to consider the notion that Freud might have been a murderer. Even my own research about the dark side of his personality did not prepare me to take that additional step. The idea seemed bizarre, and made me experience a nauseous rejection in the weeks and months following my first reading of Miller's strange book. Besides all this, I was not favorably impressed by the level of scholarship in Miller's volume: his tendency to go off on tangents; to make what seemed like extreme and unproved claims; to assert that Freud had murdered Tausk without offering adequate evidence, and much more.

Did Freud "Arrange" for Murder?

Despite my previous remarks, in this book I will present compelling evidence, perhaps more persuasive than Miller's, that Sigmund Freud did arrange for the murders of two men. The core of my evidence will be found in chapters eight and nine, but my case against Freud will be made throughout this entire volume, buttressed by three additional manuscripts about Freud's life (mainly completed but unpublished). Their titles are *The Dark Side of Freud*; *Secret Sex Lives: Freud, Jung, and Jones*; and *The Fatal Freud*.

Months after I had read and rejected the core of Miller's book, a colleague introduced me to Krüll's volume with its impressive section describing the role of counterfeit currency in the Freud families in Vienna and Manchester. That led to my immersion in Gicklhorn's work and to the data collection which eventually prompted me to write a long chapter in *The Dark Side of Freud* concerning the Freud's criminal activities. In turn that caused me to ponder the peculiar demise of Emanuel Freud in 1914, when he allegedly fell from a moving train to his death, which Miller did not discuss at all!

An unsettling question began to haunt my mind. Was it plausible that Emanuel's unlikely accident was really a murder, a disguised killing that somehow was connected with that dangerous counterfeiting enterprise that had cost Josef Freud a ten-year prison sentence? Had Emanuel been maneuvered by someone, perhaps someone he knew, onto the platform connecting two railroad carriages, beaten on the head, and dumped onto the tracks? Or was there a less exotic reason for Emanuel's death that did not involve murder?

Unfortunately, the literature regarding his death was quite sparse. Krüll's book

(p, 268) cited the official death certificate of the General Register's Office in London which recorded that he had died on October 17, 1914 at age 81. That was soon after the onset of World War 1, in July and August of 1914. However, Krüll did not provide any information as to why Emanuel was riding that train between Manchester and Southport, how fast the train was moving when he fell, whether the accident occurred at night or in daytime hours, and whether there was damage to his head that was consistent with a severe blow-perhaps from a hammer.

Evidently, the official death record gave no indication that police interviewed passengers on the train to learn whether anyone could explain or describe Emanuel's falling. Had anyone seen him fall? If the fall occurred at night, perhaps fellow passengers were dozing and unaware of any pertinent circumstances? Probably the police had no reason to suspect foul play, so there might not have been a thorough investigation. Since the deceased was an old man, the simple assumption might have been that he died of natural circumstances that precipitated his accidental death. That is, perhaps he had decided to get a breath of fresh air by walking onto the platform where he then fainted, suffered stroke or heart attack, and fell to his death?

Krüll gave one additional bit of information (p. 264) concerning Emanuel's death. She cited this ambiguous conclusion from the death certificate filed in London: "Cause of death: accidental injuries received.

[. . . continued on Scagnelli's page 20]

. . . Instead, Freud's essay [on Moses] argued that the bodily and facial appearance of the statue [of Moses] indicated that the moment of rage had passed, that Moses had calmed his anger, and that he would not break the tablets. Of course, this implied that the impending slaughter had been forestalled, and that Moses would restrain his lethal command. Apparently, it did not bother Freud that he was rewriting the Bible, so pressing were his needs to concoct a fantasy that would allow him to deny his murderous intentions toward Jung.

Even Ernest Jones had to admit that the 1914 essay represented a fantasy about Freud's heroic self restraint, Jones acknowledged that the master was expressing his hope of restraining his own urgent impulses to murder and inflict revenge. But had this ploy been successful? Chapter 8 will explore this question and will show its relevance to Emanuel Freud's uncanny fall from a train in October 1914.

My study of the Freud/Jung letters and of Jung's autobiography convinced me that,

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during the period surrounding their breakup, Jung did harbor urgent death-wishes toward Freud. Surely, Freud was correct in believing that Jung was concealing strong unconscious desires to injure or kill him. These presumed threats could have stimulated Freud's murderous impulses to the point that they required concrete expression. A chapter in *Secret Sex Lives* will show that the breakup of these men provoked depressed and suicidal feelings in Jung for several years along with behavior that some Freudians insist was overtly psychotic. In comparison, the dangers of Freud's flagrant psychosis were probably curtailed, and psychic pressures released, by his presumed arranging of Emanuel's death. I assume that Freud concocted a plan to murder Emanuel in a semi-psychotic episode during stressful days preceding the outbreak of World War I, and that it helped him to avoid a full-blown psychotic breakdown. Extensive data in my early chapters show that Freud struggled with near-psychotic episodes throughout his life, totaling fourteen or more such episodes.

The biography by Max Schur (1972), Freud's physician and friend, emphasized his powerful murderous impulses toward family members. Although Schur was a sensitive psychoanalyst, it never occurred to him to inquire whether Freud might have actualized those impulses on occasion, as proposed by Eric Miller and the present author. Nor did Schur acknowledge that Freud often struggled with suicidal urges, for that is contrary to the mystique which asserts that he was incomparably brave and would never resort to suicide.

On occasion Freud adopted a macho stance, insisting that only a coward would commit suicide. Therefore, Schur denied vehemently the testimony of Freud's previous physician, Dr. Felix Deutsch. Deutsch asserted that when cancer appeared in 1923 Freud tried to "delegate" his suicide. . .

End of Quoted Material from Scagnelli