

The Wolf-Man's Howling

Introduction

It all starts with the patient. A most particular patient, in this circumstance, whose clinical case history is mentioned in any good-enough introductory course of psychoanalysis; whose pseudonym sparks zoomorphic associations to a beastly human, partially covered in fur, howling at the full moon – the Wolf Man. *Our Wolf Man*: a conduit of sorts, granting a direct – albeit initially subjective – link to the founder of that which we so fondly follow. The patient, *our* patient: initially ‘some-one’ desperately seeking treatment for his pressing ailments; ultimately ‘that-one’ who would find himself – very knowingly and arguably quite contently so – a treasured artifact of psychoanalysis. A patient, whose life history and psychological ill-health will continue to be handed over from one generation of psychoanalysts to the next, whose destiny will continue to stretch far beyond his own mortality, while closely under scrutiny to whomever feels up for the task. Indeed, since its publication in 1918, Freud's *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* is arguably one of the most discussed clinical case histories within psychoanalysis of all time. An uncountable number of essays, articles, books, and texts of other sorts have been authored to discuss and interpret aspects of the case and its patient's further developments (c.f. Brunswick, 1928; Gardiner, 1971; Blum, 1974; Mahony, 1984, to name only a single few). Although the pertinence of this and other case histories authored by Freud has certainly been up for scholarly discussion (cf. Mahony, 1993), their relevance never seems to cease in the psychoanalytic discourse. In 2018, the Czech-Swedish artist and sculptor Klara Kristalova was invited by the Swedish art museum *Artipelag*, located in the midst of nature in the archipelagos of Gustavsberg, to exhibit her sculpture *Det som håller mig kvar, bär mig vidare* [That which keeps me, carries me forward] (Appendix A). Carried by her roots, the little girl gives the impression of moving forward, supported by that which solidly grounds her to the past. It seems only natural that in order to understand what *is* today or *will be* tomorrow, we must take into account that which *was* yesterday. And indeed, similarly to the psychoanalyst assisting the patient in grasping the peculiarities of his or her childhood, psychoanalytic historians must persistently continue to glance backwards into the childhood of psychoanalysis, to understand that which has thus far been, in order to bring the comprehension forward.

The proposed research project aims to analyze and discuss an invaluable source of data in the form of interviews with Freud's patient, Sergei Konstantinovitch Pankejeff – more famously known as the “Wolf Man”. While these interviews were conducted between the 1950s and 70s, the large majority were only recently declassified (2016) for on-site access at the Library of Congress (LoC) in Washington D.C., USA (*Brief History of the Collection*, n.d); in 2017, the interviews were digitized and made available online at the LoC website (*Sigmund Freud Collection Now Online*, 2017). Before providing a detailed description of the proposed project, a short presentation of the research context and state of research will follow.

Context and State of Research

A little over sixty years ago – in February of 1951 – the *Sigmund Freud Archives* (SFA) was established (Fichtner, 2009; *Brief History of the Collection*, n.d.). A decade earlier, shortly after Sigmund Freud's passing in 1939, efforts of gathering letters and other documents connected to Freud had been initiated by his daughter, Anna Freud, who in correspondence with Belarusian-German psychoanalyst Max Eitington would mention its main purpose as promoting the completion of Freud's scientific work (Fichtner, 2009). By chiefly serving as a collecting body rather than as a research institution, the SFA was set to “...[make] certain that the next generation will possess the maximum of data, primarily in the form of extant letters and tape recordings of interviews with all those who ever met Freud and

could still be reached" (Eissler, 1974, p. 403). The involvement of an individual of fundamental importance to the establishment and upkeep of the archives – Austrian psychoanalyst Kurt R. Eissler – is first documented to around 1946, while establishing contact with Anna Freud on the matter (Fichtner, 2009). In a later letter addressed to the Austrian psychoanalyst and pedagogue August Aichhorn, dated 1948, Eissler pointed out that "Alles was sich auf Freud bezieht + noch hergestellt werden kann, sollte schleunigst veröffentlicht werden. Es ist unheimlich wie schnell Dinge zerstört werden oder verschwinden" (as quote in Fichtner, 2009, p. 3). Indicating the importance of rapidly collecting already existing documents able to supplement Freud's work, the previous quote further highlights Eissler's eagerness to produce secondary material about Freud in the form of interviews (cf. Eissler, 1974, p. 403); and indeed, Eissler most diligently conducted interviews from the 1950s to the 1970s with more than 260 individuals possessing a connection¹ with Freud (May, 2021). The complete SFA collection consists of 48,600 items divided into ten different series². The circa 30 interviews serving as the subject of inquiry for this project can be found within the series *Interviews and Recollections, 1914-1998*. In the summers of 1952-1955, 1957-1960, and 1978, Eissler conducted a sequence of semi structured interviews with Sergei Pankejeff in Vienna, Austria; the majority³ of which were audiotaped by Eissler and subsequently transcribed by a third party. Most of the transcripts of the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews were declassified in 2016 and are available on-site at the LoC. In February of 2017, these interviews – together with 20,000 other items of the Sigmund Freud Collection – were digitized and made available at the LoC website (*Sigmund Freud Collection Now Online, 2017; Brief History of the Collection, n.d*). Containing more than 1,500 pages of transcribed conversations in total, the interviews moreover include Eissler's notes, interpretations, impressions, and recollections of non-recorded dialogue between the two. Since its declassification in 2016, and to the best of the author's knowledge, the contents of the interviews have hitherto only been briefly dealt with in two different publications (see Tomlinson, 2019 and Borch-Jacobsen, 2021). While Tomlinson provides an informative first impression of the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews on the occasion of the 100-year-anniversary of the publication of the original case history, Borch-Jacobsen uses singled-out excerpts from the interviews to express criticism of Freud's technique. This is done by, for instance, citing a passage from an interview taking place on 30 July 1954, where Pankejeff discusses his own and his father's opinion of Emil Kraepelin⁴. Borch-Jacobsen asserts that the statement conveys Pankejeff's preference and approval of Kraepelin over Freud⁵ – a claim which truly is and will be up for debate.

Almost half a century earlier, the publication of Muriel Gardiner's (Ed.) *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud* (1971) served as a landmark in the scholarly discussion of Freud's famous case history. Perhaps most importantly, Pankejeff here in his own words – under the pseudonym of the Wolf Man – provides recollections of his childhood, adulthood, and of Freud. Moreover, Gardiner, who functioned as a friend and confidante of Pankejeff, and who would witness him at pivotal life events in his adulthood, shares her perceptions of the Wolf-Man in his later years (chapters *Meetings with the Wolf-Man (1938-1949); Another Meeting with the Wolf-Man (1956); and The Wolf-Man Grows Older*).

¹ In her article 2021 article, Ulrike May mentions Eissler's interviewees to have included "patients and their relatives, [Freud's] students, members of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and other psychoanalytic societies, lecture attendees, fellow students, classmates, childhood friends, members of his family, acquaintances and friends of the family, antique dealers, booksellers, tobacco shop owners, his doctors, artists who portrayed him, occupants of Berggasse 19, as well as with people with whom Freud had spoken only once or twice" (p.3).

² Family Papers, 1851-1978; General Correspondence, 1871-1996; Subject File, 1856-1988; Writings, 1877- 1985; Interviews and Recollections, 1914-1998; Addition, 1912-1983; Artifacts and Paintings, Circa 6th Century B.C.E.-1936; Oversize, 1859-1985 (About this collection, n.d)

³ As per Pankejeff's direct request, the audio recorder would at times be turned off. During some of these instances, Eissler would add his recollections of the unrecorded conversations afterwards. See for instance, 27 July 1952, p.12.

⁴ Both Sergei Pankejeff and his father Konstantin Pankejeff were treated by Emil Kraepelin. Kraepelin suggested the diagnosis of *manic depressive insanity* to explain Konstantin Pankejeff's psychopathology; later, Kraepelin would suggest the same diagnosis for the son. In reality, as will be discussed in the upcoming publication, the behavior which prompted Kraepelin's assumption in the latter's case was much more complicated than the ascribed diagnosis.

⁵ More specifically, Borch-Jacobsen states that "For Pankejeff, Freud had been completely mistaken [regarding the diagnosis]. As he had already told Eissler in 1954, it was Kraepelin and not Freud who had been right about his case: 'Ah, Kraepelin, he's the only one who understood anything' (30 July 1954)" (p.164). In the author's opinion, the meaning of these sentences need to be considered in the context of what is said before and afterwards. More so it seems, that Pankejeff here refers to his father's high opinion of Kraepelin, rather than his own (see Appendix B for the relevant transcription). Pankejeff's tendentially more negative view of Kraepelin is moreover supported by further statements in the interviews.

Including excerpts of personal letters between the two, Gardiner also provides her diagnostic impressions together with descriptions of his personality during “his more healthy and less healthy periods” (Gardiner, 1971, p.383). While undeniably a most valuable source of information to supplement that which we learnt in Freud’s original publication, the recollections provided by Pankejeff concerning his own life are lacking in range and depth (as also discussed by Mahony, 1984, p.11-12). For instance, Pankejeff completely omits the reader of memories and events occurring during his teenage years that may have shaped his personality and further life choices. Luckily for us, Pankejeff does indeed discuss his teenage years and its potentially formative instances⁶ within the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews. Another peculiarity in the memoirs is that Pankejeff scarcely mentions his psychological symptoms around the time of his treatments with Freud, nor does he discuss the nose-related paranoia or subsequent treatment with Ruth Mack Brunswick.

A further piece of importance was provided by journalist Karin Obholzer in 1982. Apart from the ones conducted by Eissler, *The Wolf-Man Sixty Years Later: Conversations with Freud’s Controversial Patient* contains another known instance of interview material with Pankejeff. Conducted between 1974 and 1976, starting when Pankejeff had reached the respectable age of 87, many controversial claims can be found within the conversations. To name a few, we learn that Pankejeff partly holds Freud responsible for the loss of his fortune after Freud had not “allowed [Pankejeff] to travel back to Russia” (p.49) to collect his belongings during the First World War. Moreover, Pankejeff exerts critique towards Mack Brunswick and of her diagnosing him with paranoia, as well as his psychoanalytic treatments with her, and – additionally – the inadequacy of her subsequent supplement writings on the Wolf Man (p.54- 59; p. 62). Another topic, which has previously, more or less gone, unmentioned elsewhere, is that of the childlessness of Pankejeff and his wife, Therese. In the conversations with Obholzer, we learn that Therese had suffered from a miscarriage (p.93), while pregnant by Pankejeff. At first glance, this might not seem as a particularly noteworthy instance. It is only when we have a look into the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews – more specifically in those conducted on 27 July 1952 (p. 3-4, 12) and 1953 (p.19) – that we realize that the infertility of Therese can, in fact, be directly traced back to a specific recommendation and referral made by Freud, the details of which will be disclosed and discussed within the frames of this research project.

As previously mentioned, an uncountable number of publications on Sergei Pankejeff and his treatment with Freud exists in the psychoanalytic discourse. Out of those not already mentioned, Harold P. Blum’s *The Borderline Personality of the Wolf-Man* (1974) bears high relevance for the proposed research project. In his article, Blum argues that Pankejeff had not suffered from an infantile neurosis; much more, in the light of the developments in psychoanalysis up until that point in time, he suggests that Pankejeff had suffered from a “borderline condition with episodes of infantile psychosis” (p.741). This hypothesis was revisited in 2013, while confirmed by new interpretations of a Rorschach test, taken by Pankejeff at the age of 69 and administered by Frederick S. Weil (Blum, 2013; Schafer, 2013; Woods, 2013). In the proposed research project below, the most prominent and relevant of the hitherto published material on the matter will be taken into account while examining aspects of novelty provided via the Eissler-Pankejeff-Interviews.

Research Proposal

Working title: The Wolf-Man’s Howling: Symptomatology of Sergei Pankejeff as described by Sergei Pankejeff

Format: Essay, article with the aim of publication in a journal

Scope: Around 20-30 pages excl. references

⁶ For instance, at the age of 12 up until his late teenage years, Pankejeff’s mother is mentioned to have led a long-lasting affair with an older student attending the same Gymnasium as Pankejeff; something which awoke great jealousy and rage in Pankejeff (26.07.52, p.58-64).

Time frame: Completion planned for February 2023.

While reading through the material thus far published on the Wolf Man, it has become evident that the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews provide a unique opportunity to supplement existing knowledge on Sergei Pankejeff and Freud's case history. In an essay, I wish to articulate Pankejeff's own expression and understanding of his psychological ailments throughout his life, while at the same time discussing previously undisclosed, possibly character-shaping, life events, as well as his apprehension of his treatment with Freud and Mack Brunswick. In detail, I wish to

- 1)
 - a. Bring forth and discuss Pankejeff's own description of his symptomatology preceding and during his first and second psychoanalysis with Freud, as shared in the interviews.
 - b. Depict his physical and mental state around his analyses with Ruth Mack Brunswick and those conducted in his later life, as shared in the interviews.
 - c. Detail Pankejeff's apprehension of his treatments with Sigmund Freud and Ruth Mack Brunswick, as shared in the interviews
- 2) Discuss and analyze the patient's own apperception of his symptomatology.
- 3) Describe a number of important, arguably life-changing, events in his childhood and adulthood, previously undiscussed elsewhere – partly in direct relation to Sigmund Freud's treatment technique – shedding light of their influence on Pankejeff's symptomatology.

In the case of a successful application, parts of the sum awarded via the Gerhard Fichtner Stipendium will be dedicated to acquire material related to Sergei Pankejeff and his psychoanalytic treatment, currently available at the LoC and not yet available online. It may be expected that this material will further add to the already rich data surrounding Pankejeff's symptomatology, life, and personality, and his psychoanalytic treatments. The material to be acquired are:

Sergius Pankejeff Papers (Finding aid LoC)

- • Box X:1: Closed: Correspondence; Eissler, K. R., 1962-1963; Closed until 2020.
- • Box 2: Writings: "Der Tod meines Vaters und weider ein Sanatorium," undated.
- • Box 4: Rorschach test and interview conducted by Frederick Weil, 1955, undated.

R. Mack Brunswick Papers (finding aid LoC)

- Box 1: Correspondence: Pankejeff, Sergius, 1938.

Muriel Gardiner Papers (finding aid LoC)

- Box 1: Correspondence Pankejeff, Sergius, 1946-1980

In addition, ideally, parts of the monetary compensation are to be used to obtain digital copies of the tape recordings of the Eissler-Pankejeff interviews, which are likewise stored at the LoC and available for duplication in the form of digital copies. The intention with this is to supplement and back up passages in the interviews where auditory support might clear up possible disputes in the form of interpretations of statements. Moreover – on a less academic and a more informal note – seeing as the project aims to vocalize Pankejeff's own perceptions, I personally find it preferable – and admittedly most exciting – to receive the privilege to hear his voice.