

## Amnesias of a Freudian Kind

### Part II

This essay is the second of a two-part series that examines Freud's constructions of amnesia as they participated in "forgetting," both within the mechanisms of his psychoanalytic project and, far less investigated, as a way to fix the borders of his idea of an unconscious. As argued in Part One (O'Donoghue, 2021), the operations of forgetting that Freud would identify with repression were in fact constituted by a preceding removal from memory, one that was discursive rather than psychical. Significant events were banished from view—or, better, hidden in plain sight—by being enunciated as valueless, or as Freud said of his early years in Vienna, "nothing was worth remembering" (Freud, 1899, p. 312). What remained were selected fragments of one's past that were interpretable as markers of repression, and as such tied to specific *a priori* drives whose sexual or aggressive impulses necessitated their inaccessibility to consciousness. This allowed for a schema to be placed on the vagaries of an individual life and desires, and those that were irreducible to such characterizations, originating with Freud's own early life, were rendered forgettable.

Freud's specific uses of the term "*amnesie*" have received surprisingly little attention, a fact that can be attributable to its lack of psychoanalytic gravitas—in contrast to repression—and as such it functioned as a descriptor that could be applied more fluidly. Several of its streams, including Freud's earliest published discussion of amnesia, as well as its later "infantile" version, were charted in the first portion of this study. We turn now to its presence within *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), where we find a striking example of expungement as Freud attempted to treat a patient by making her "reminiscences" permanently

inaccessible. After discussing this case, we will consider several genealogies that have been offered for Freud's attempt at such an extreme memory effacement. The essay concludes with a discussion of suppression, posited here as a form of amnesic erasure that, enacted by Freud as a conscious way to delimit the content of unconscious phenomena, was never, not surprisingly, privileged within the construction of psychological life that resulted from it.

### Hysteria, Amnesia, and Discontent

In his treatment of "Emmy von N," likely occurring in brief periods during 1888 and 1889, Freud, in his "first attempt" (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 48) at hypnotic intervention—and his first recorded clinical case—was able to remove "melancholy things" from her memory by "not only wiping out her memories of them in their plastic form [but] by removing her whole recollection of them" (p. 61). The narrative of "Emmy," his pseudonym for Fanny von Sulzer-Wirth Moser (1848–1924) was documented in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) as a series of journal entries detailing the episodes of sustained contact that Freud had with her. He added a subsequent self-reflection on the case in 1924, in a footnote to a later edition (1925) of *Studies* that Strachey added at the conclusion of the case, where Freud observed that "no analyst can read this case to-day without a smile of pity" (p. 105, n. 1). Such a comment intimates that Freud, by this point in the codification of his psychoanalytic project, was comfortable enough to proffer such a retrospective revelation of naïveté. Over a decade after this admission he penned a letter, in July of 1935, to Fanny Moser's daughter and namesake that appears to be his last word on the case.<sup>1</sup> There he defended his inability to correctly identify the elder Moser's condition (rather baldly stated to her daughter as "unconscious hatred for her two children") because at that point he "didn't know anything," having not yet understood the workings of the "hidden psyche" (Tögel, 1999, p. 1165). In an earlier correspondence with this younger Fanny Moser, in 1918, he claimed that he had stopped his use of hypnosis (it was "meaningless and useless") because of this case, with

this abandonment resulting in “the incentive to create psychoanalytic therapy more in accordance with reason” (Andersson, 1979, p. 14). These retrospective disavowals suggest that Freud was eager to relegate this time to a moment in psychoanalytic “prehistory.” His attempt at a volitional removal of memories seems cast as an especially dismissible prolegomenon, and as such has prompted little interest in pursuing the motivations for such an unusual technique. But there may be insights to be unearthed here that speak to memory deletions—Freud’s own—that actually were constitutive of this turn to analytic “reason.” Fanny Moser’s “amnesia” is worth finding and unfolding, although, rather like Poe’s purloined letter, it is hidden in view by fashioning it as bespoiled and tossed aside.

When she met Freud, Moser was a forty-year-old woman from a Swiss-German family, with two teenage daughters, who had inherited of a vast fortune when her much-older husband had died suddenly of a heart attack soon after the birth of their younger child. By the time she was referred to Freud from his colleague and co-author of *Studies*, Joseph Breuer, she was identified as being beset by symptoms that were quickly attributed to that of a “hysteric”: agitation, stammering, hallucinations, debilitating fears, a convulsive tic, hearing a “crackling” sound, and, at intervals of several minutes, the need to anxiously exclaim “Keep still! Don’t say anything! Don’t touch me!” (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 49). Because Freud immediately observed her susceptibility to hypnosis, he began there by placing her in a sanatorium and limiting her access to her children (p. 50). Doctor and patient then settled into an intimate *pas de deux* (Ellenberger, 1993, p. 275). Moser would detail her health complaints each day, some of which led to associations to other illnesses that often involved her large family; she was one of fourteen siblings, yet “only four of them survive,” Freud noted, at the time of his meeting her (1895, p. 49). After engaging her in this form of exchange, he would proceed with the hypnosis. Questions would be posed, often asking for elaboration on comments she had made in their previous conversations. From that would emerge a wealth of detail, revelations that Whitebook (2017) characterizes as a suspension of “intentional thinking” and, as such, a nascent form of free association (pp. 156–157). Much of this content

concerned her experiences of death, extending from animals in childhood, to her siblings and mother, and most notably, the sudden passing of her husband. But noticeably absent from Moser's narratives were sexual matters; Freud must have believed she had transcended such desires, attributing that to some state of vaunted nobility to which she certainly aspired. As the sorrowful and distressing stories were told, he would pronounce them, asserting the prerogative of hypnotic suggestion, to be forgotten. Freud imagined them as mental images and, as such, they were pictures to be obliterated "so she is no longer able to see them before her" (1895, p. 53). In this way, the power of suggestion was to create what both he and Fanny Moser would recognize under the term "amnesia," here understood as the wiping away of all trace of the memory.

As details of her identity and activities have come to be known, including a very active sex life and troubled relationships with her daughters, the rather censorious structure of the treatment becomes clearer (Appignanesi and Forrester, 1992, pp. 99–100). Freud did not allow for the complexities of the relational dynamics to play out before he attempted to wash them away. He considered his interventions a failure, as her symptoms returned, but not, so it seemed, the banished images. When he met her later, "she complained that there were a number of most important moments in her life of which she had only the vaguest memory" (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 61, n. 1). To this Freud wrote, "I had to be careful not to tell her the cause of this particular instance of amnesia" (1895, p. 61, n. 1). While his treatment did not cure her "hysteria," it did appear to prove that the suggestion to erase memories was *mutually perceived* as in fact having had a lasting effect. Freud had indeed achieved his aim of inducing an amnesia, but from the patient's perspective this came at the price of obliterating certain memories that she considered "crucial" and would have wished to retain in sharper focus.

Freud had no such aspirations for recalling this treatment however. With the exception of the subsequent footnote and the two letters to the elder Moser daughter noted above, Freud remained virtually silent about this case later. Nearly ten years after "Emmy," Freud would accord a very different version of *amnésie* a defining role in the functioning of the unconscious,

detailed in the first part of this essay as “infantile amnesia.” But in this latter phenomenon, those memories that were repressed in one’s earliest years could be unearthed through analytic interpretation. Whatever was in excess of that “hidden” material—e.g., childhood experiences that were not of analytic value, originating with Freud’s—remained lost to another form of forgetting, another version of amnesia, far more akin to what he believed he had achieved for Fanny Moser.

Threading the Moser case through Freud’s later construction of amnesia is as challenging as attempting to reconstruct the sources that might have inspired his choice of this method. Six years after its conclusion, as Freud introduced the case in his *Studies on Hysteria*, the distinctiveness of his treatment of “Emmy” had itself seemingly been wiped from memory. He writes that he attempted to use Josef Breuer’s “technique of investigation under hypnosis” (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 48). Freud is referring to the method of “abreaction,” (1895, p. 9), where, under hypnosis, memories and emotions are revived, to be experienced and brought to consciousness; the curative agent lay in the belief that the affect became attached to the traumatic content, and thus is key to the demise of the latter’s pathogenic effect. In fact, this is not what happened with Fanny Moser. Rather than removing the symptoms through the release of affect associated with memories of their onset—Breuer’s technique—Freud attempted to use hypnotic suggestion to expunge all access to the experiences themselves. In M. B. Macmillan’s (1979) review of other individuals who may have served as models for Freud’s technique, he asserted without reservation that the latter’s treatment of Fanny Moser “owed nothing to Breuer” (p. 299).

### Doctor Freud’s Process

Countering what Freud had led his readers to believe was a treatment modality shared with his *Studies* co-author, Macmillan has argued that the wiping away of memories had Gallic, not Viennese, roots, but not in the most likely source, that of Jean-Martin Charcot. Although it is to his fellowship at the Salpêtrière in Paris with Charcot over the winter of 1885–86

that Freud is indebted for his earliest understanding of *amnesie* and hysteria, as discussed in Part One of this essay, there is no evidence that its director during Freud's time there practiced a curative form of memory effacement. Instead, the reliance on hypnotic suggestion, certainly a feature in the case of "Emmy," is better located in Charcot's rival, Hippolyte Bernheim. The influence of Bernheim and the "Nancy School," named for the city where he had resided since the early 1870s, was strong during the period of Freud's work with Fanny Moser; he had translated a volume of Bernheim's in that period<sup>2</sup> and had traveled with another patient<sup>3</sup> to see him, while still treating Moser. But the use of suggestion for the "wiping away" of memories, rather than alleviating somatic symptoms, had no parallel in Bernheim's work.

However, it is noteworthy that while visiting Nancy, Freud wrote to his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays, and apparently recommended a novel by Edward Bellamy titled *Doctor Heidenhoff's Process*<sup>4</sup> (1880). Bellamy, indebted to the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne and other nineteenth-century New England writers (Brodhead, 1986, p. 66), published this novel in 1880 and relied on a variety of stock stereotypes: a small regional town; a depressed, shamed woman who had sexually transgressed; and her long-suffering and devoted male companion, desperate to marry her yet watching her slip ever deeper into "melancholy." But there is also a less predictable theme—the desire to find the means to erase memories of past deeds—that undoubtedly attracted Freud to this otherwise generic tale. Both the female protagonist, Madeline, and a young male acquaintance whose financial misdeeds led to his suicide, shared with Freud a similar longing: all expressed a wish to drink from the river Lethe. Freud's amnesic desire would be expressed to his then-intimate friend Wilhelm Fliess nearly a decade after reading Bellamy's book (Freud, 1985, p. 263), and just prior to visiting the cathedral in Orvieto, where he would see the frescoes of the painter Signorelli. Indeed, he had his wish fulfilled when, in the following year, he could not recall this artist's name. The power of that forgetting was highly consequential for his nascent explication of unconscious functioning, as previously detailed (O'Donoghue, 2021, p. 175ff.). But for Madeline, the means to amnesia was indebted to a machine rather than

a psychical mechanism: responding to an advertisement for a procedure of "thought-expiration" proffered by a Dr. Heidenhoff, she underwent his "process" in the hopes of having the torturing recollections of her past affair "destroyed." There was no hypnotic or cathartic method here; rather, Madeline was instructed to focus silently on her unwanted thoughts and, as that occurred, a "galvanic current" running between a battery and her head selectively attacked "morbid" brain tissue supposedly diseased by pernicious memories. The electrodes allowed for both the tainted tissue and the unwanted reminiscences to be destroyed (Bellamy, 1880, p. 110). Ruth Leys (2000) provides an excellent reading of this portion of Bellamy's novel in the context of Pierre Janet's claims to hypnotically-induced memory effacements and notes a passage in the text (p. 104) where Heidenhoff imagines a future where such procedures are commonplace, having become "merely a nice problem in surgery" (p. 107, n. 39). But there is an important twist to this story that is not revealed until the very end. The whole narrative of the doctor and his process were a dream of Henry's, the faithful boyfriend: it was his wish for a drink from Lethe. This was to be unraveled as he awoke to Madeline's suicide note and the realization that her death had occurred as he slept.

It could be said that Freud's technique, unlike Bellamy's fictional one, actually fulfilled the wish for memory erasure. After all, Fanny Moser complained of this as an unwelcomed long-term effect whereas Madeline's "cure" was merely Henry's fantasy. Macmillan suggests possible precedents for Emmy's "expiration" in both Janet and Joseph Delboeuf, the latter whose work he first identified with the treatment of "Emmy" in an article published in 1979. Delboeuf, a Belgian philosopher and psychologist, had spent the same winter months at the Salpêtrière as Freud (Delboeuf, 1886a, pp. 121ff.), and they would have, in all likelihood, known each other. At that time, Delboeuf's own understanding of hypnotic suggestion was still in a nascent state (Delboeuf, 1886b, p. 275), so it is unlikely that the cases that he compiled into a volume several years later would have been part of their discussions in Paris. But there is certainly relevant material in these published clinical cases, as Delboeuf would claim to be able to remove persistent visual images related to traumatic events in the patient's past.

But whether these accounts, first appearing in successive issues of *Revue de Belgique* in late 1888 and early 1889<sup>5</sup> and then published as a monograph (Delboeuf, 1889), would have reached Freud during his time with Fanny Moser cannot be assumed, although Macmillan suggests the possibility (1979, p. 306). It is more likely that whatever the influence it may have had was applied retrospectively to the content of the interactions, although Freud did not credit it.

In the case of Pierre Janet, who would eventually succeed Charcot as the head of the Salpêtrière, any potential influence at the time of the Moser treatment would have occurred so early in Janet's career as to make it unlikely. He did not complete his doctoral thesis in philosophy (he went on to also receive a medical degree) until December of 1888 (Macmillan, 1997, p. 80). The book on which this thesis was based, *L'Automatisme Psychologique* (Janet, 1889), did not go into general circulation before his defense in June of 1889, and so it is very unlikely that Freud, who would acquire the book later, would have seen it while working with Fanny Moser. Janet presented the case of a young woman who had variety of symptoms, including the appearance of blindness and hallucinations that coincided with her menstrual periods. Janet claimed that she revealed under hypnosis that her initial shame at the onset of menstruation led her to try to stop the flow of blood with cold water. He was to bring her back to the scene, by hypnotic suggestion, and revive this "fixed and absurd image" that the bath had "arrested" the menstruation (Macmillan, 1997, p. 78). Leys, citing Janet's case report, characterizes this as an "excising" of the "imputed or reconstructed trauma" (2000, p. 107). But it would be difficult to extend that trajectory of this treatment back to the time of Freud's work with Fanny Moser. Thus, while Janet can be reckoned as an influence upon Freud, the specific case of his indebtedness to Janet for Emmy's unusual treatment seems less convincing. Freud certainly would have known the work of both Janet and Delboeuf before publishing his work, and he cites Janet's case, but this material would have been gleaned, in all probability, during the years between the treatment and its appearance in *Studies*.

In one of the definitive works on hypnotism of Freud's day—written in the year of Moser's case and found in Freud's



library—Albert Moll notes, after speaking about aspects of Janet and Delboeuf's work, that one can produce a post-hypnotic amnesia, but that "such cases are comparatively rare" (1890, p. 123).<sup>6</sup> But Michael Roth (2012) argues that Freud, in having exposure to the uses of hypnosis while in France, came to realize that it could serve as "an amnesic technique, a tool for removing the past from patients so that they could get on with their lives" (pp. 105–106). He goes on to suggest that Freud needed, however, to "dispense with the dream of removing the past," as he came to understand, in part through Fanny Moser herself, the need to have the past accessible for recollection. By Freud's valorizing access to past, often difficult, experiences rather than their eradication, Roth suggests he opened what would be "the space of modern historical consciousness" (p. 116). The capacity to have memories on which to reflect would come, after all, to define the psychoanalytic project. But how those recollections are selected and prioritized within Freud's nascent work of establishing psychical value occupies a third space between the legacy of hypnosis and what would become the foundational structures of Freud's construction of unconscious functioning.

That territory has been examined in a 1994 essay about Fanny Moser by Mária Török, who offers another, significantly different, reading of this case—one concerned less with amnesia in the history of hypnotic suggestion than with what it suggests about Freud. In "A Remembrance of Things Deleted: Between Freud and Emmy von N," Török argues that Freud's protocol to eradicate Moser's memories was distinctively of his own making: "[I]t had neither precedent or sequel in his own works or in theories of his contemporaries" (1994, p. 240). Unlike Macmillan, she does not search for earlier influences upon Freud's singular instance of a "memory extinction" (p. 241). Rather, Török speculates that such a deletion cure may offer an insight into his later relationship to the removal of his own undesirable recollections, both within his earlier life and, as she suggests, from what he came to identify as psychically meaningful. She asks if the impetus to erase Moser's memories might "foreshadow his subsequent rejection of trauma in the etiology of hysteria" (p. 245). As discussed in the first part of this essay, in the "Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), Freud rigorously

claimed that these origins were attributable to sexual abuse in childhood; however, he followed this with a renunciation of the veracity of such experiences in his well-known 1897 letter to Wilhelm Fleiss.

Török, in introducing Moser's "amnesia" into this reversal, suggests something striking: Freud enacted upon his emerging construction of an unconscious a procedure that he had previously used to "cure" a patient. The erasure of content that contained distressing external experiences within a specific personal history thus returned to institute a forgetting of his earlier understanding of the role of trauma in childhood. Both operations render the previous content powerless; in his action to remove undesirable history from his theory of hysteria, this earlier formulation of psyche must become forgettable. His revised theory, locating desire in the child and not the adult perpetrator, is not able to maintain its credibility if the previous assertions are discursively accessible. A person cannot fall ill due to internally-generated sexual repression and external sexual violation in the same etiological or epistemological moment. His revised construction was sustainable if only certain childhood experiences were of "worth" in these intrapsychic ways, while others, in excess of this, met a fate similar to that of Fanny Moser's sad reminiscences. The year prior to Török's text, Pety de Vries (1993) offered a similar reading of the "Emmy" case as informing Freud's renunciation of 1897; Török's work takes this antecedent further, however, suggesting that this eradication informed Freud's project more broadly. In positing "things deleted" as the initiating gesture within the construction of unconscious functioning, we can suggest, as I have argued elsewhere (O'Donoghue, 2019, pp. 318 ff.), the originary role that such an amnesia played within the formation of psychoanalysis itself.

An interesting reverberation of "Emmy's" effacement of memory returns in Freud's work in 1925, when the word *wegzuwischen* ("to wipe away") reappears in a discussion of the workings of the unconscious. In "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" Freud (1925) introduces an object for children that had the capacity to hold the incisions beneath a surface that appears to erase it, noting that the marks are actually retained on the wax "*Wunderblock*" beneath; he contrasted this to a chalkboard,

where the notations, when erased, are permanently “wipe[d] out” (p. 227). Freud goes on to discuss the example of paper, whose marks retain their permanence so the surface is eventually full and the sheet must be replaced. The chalkboard, however, can be reused, the marks “destroyed” as soon as they cease to interest, without throwing the surface away. He contrasts conscious and unconscious in this way: the paper is akin to the perceptual system associated with consciousness, whose surface becomes exhausted and must be replaced; this metaphoric use of such a surface, as Douwe Draaisma (2000) argues, itself had a considerable history (pp. 7–23). In contrast to this, the apparatus of the writing pad and the chalkboard are permanent; these could be seen as respective analogies for the two modalities of analytic forgetting, the one that Freud enunciated, as in his essay, and the one that he enacted.

### The Suppression of Everyday Life

In 1893, two years before the publication of *Studies*, Freud's interest in the topic of hysteria was undoubtedly well known to Anton Bum, who at that time was publishing two essays of his own, discussed in Part One, on the topics of amnesia and aphasia. By that time, Bum had been the editor for six years of the *Wiener medizinische Presse*, a weekly journal that published articles and lectures of broad interest to the Viennese medical community. In early January of 1893, Freud gave a paper to the *Wiener medizinischer Club*, a group that had strong ties to the *Presse*, and the text appeared in two successive issues of the *Presse*, published on January 22 and 29 as *Über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene* (“On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena”).<sup>7</sup> Josef Breuer is cited as the co-author, although Strachey contends that this presentation “bears every mark of being the sole work of Freud” (Freud, 1893, p. 26). Although we do not have a record of the Club members' responses, the lecture certainly must have elicited interest, if for no other reason than the speaker's claim that in the work of his colleague, Breuer, we have “the first time in which a physician succeeded in elucidating all the symptoms of the hysterical state” (Freud, 1893, p. 29). Freud's lecture had its

origins in a two-part article that he did indeed co-author with Breuer; it had been published in the *Neurologisches Zentralblatt* in the first weeks of January 1893 in Berlin. This text would come to serve as the prefatory chapter to their *Studies*, ushering in the cases of various women whose pathologies were characterized by Freud as those that Charcot neglected: “common, non-traumatic hysteria” (Freud, 1993, p. 29). The title had two added words: “Preliminary Communication,” the term by which this essay is now widely known.

George Makari (2008) has distinguished what was at stake for each author in this important text. For Breuer, it was “his memory therapy, in which the recollection of dissociated ideas could bring symptomatic relief” (p. 43); this is the accomplishment that Freud lauded in his lecture to his medical colleagues. Much of the material introduced here was drawn from Breuer’s treatment of Bertha Pappenheim, whose case, under the guise of “Anna O.,” follows the “Preliminary Communication” in *Studies*. But for Freud, it was something else: the belief that “psychic conflict and the suppression of ideas were sufficient to create hysteria” (2008, p. 43). It is through this lens that it is particularly important to examine the use of amnesia. Certain memories will eventually erode, while others remain and become “pathogenic.” When Breuer and Freud introduce the wearing-away process, and distinguish these memories from those that may be forgotten by not being sufficiently “abreacted,” they introduce for the first time a word that will have particular importance for Freud. When speaking of things that a “patient wished to forget” they characterize this as “therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed” (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 10). In this inaugural naming of the act of repression (1895, p. 10, n. 1), its function and that of suppression appear quite interchangeable, with the emphasis on the patient’s will. Although repression will become an increasingly important feature, ultimately drawing constructions of amnesia into psychoanalytic discourse, Freud remained rather vague for some time about its delineation from suppression. In the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)—a subject Freud first discussed in his “amnesia” entry in Bum’s encyclopedia, introduced in the first part of this essay—published nearly seven years later, this ambiguity still exists:

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I have intentionally left gaps in the treatment of my theme because to fill them would on the one hand require too great an effort and on the other would involve my basing myself on materials that are alien to the subject of dreams. For instance, I have omitted to state whether I attribute different meanings to the words “suppressed” and “repressed.” It should have been clear, however, that the latter lays more stress than the former upon the fact of attachment to the unconscious. (Freud, 1900, p. 606)

This passage suggests the presence of a Freudian construction of defense—*Unterdrückung* (“suppression”)—that operated in the realm of volitional intention. As a psychological mechanism, this action has received little scrutiny, overshadowed, like amnesia, by its unconscious counterpart of repression, whose significance was as profound as suppression’s became ephemeral; indeed, Freud characterized repression as the “cornerstone on which all psycho-analysis rests,” as the “most essential part of it” (1914, p. 16). Far less fanfare was accorded conscious disavowal, which, according to Freud’s formulation, was a phenomenon that did not cross over the border into the unconscious: as noted at the conclusion of Part One of this essay, there was no return, psychoanalytically, of the suppressed.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), in their brief entry for suppression, note that “in the broad sense,” any mechanism for eliminating “distressing or unwelcome content” can be considered a suppression, and thus repression could be seen as a “specific mode” of it (pp. 438–439). Freud’s treatment of “Emmy” could also be categorized as a doubling of suppression: it was both an enactment of this erasure and a subsequent disavowal and silence concerning it, in the hopes of having it forgotten. In Freud’s early writings on hysteria suppression and repression were used at times synonymously and were more descriptive than technical. But as Freud focused upon the distinctive intrapsychic workings of repression, the two concepts grew apart, although a certain fluidity between them still can be seen in the passage from his dream book. The determining difference was access to the unconscious. Suppression involved a conscious wish to banish a thought, but while Freud would come to believe that such ideas can enter into the “preconscious,” they cannot gain admission into the unconscious. In the same

way, affect is also excluded from this intrapsychic realm, as it is not an idea, and would be “inhibited, or even abolished” (Freud, 1915, p. 153). Not addressed is the specific content of these mentations and emotions, and how distressing, in some cases traumatic, occurrences (sexual or not) experienced in the course of daily life were rendered forgettable and thus excluded from relevancy to the unconscious. Much about the functioning of such omissions remained in abeyance, as Laplanche and Pontalis concede, observing that within the corpus of Freud’s work “the denotation of suppression has not been clearly defined” (p. 438).

Because suppression did not go on to figure as a compelling analytic concept, its importance has faded. However, it is worthwhile to revive it, as it suggests an act of volition in forgetting that is important to complicate. In a footnoted commentary to his translation of the “Preliminary Communication,” Strachey observed, decades after it was written, that Freud’s intended meaning of the term “repressed” should not assume that his use of terms such as “deliberately” or “intentionally” indicates “the existence of a motive and carries no implication of conscious intention” (Breuer and Freud, 1893/1895, p. 10, n. 1). But this may impose a distinction that was, in the 1890s, still very much in flux. Freud would note a year after the “Preliminary Communication,” in a paper on defense, that “the splitting of the content of consciousness is the result of an act of will on the part of the patient,” one “initiated by an effort of will whose motive can be specified” (Freud, 1894, p. 46). The question of whether or not there can be an “intentional unconscious” extends from philosophy to the critiques of social constructivism, but in this context, its plausibility as an epistemic category is of less significance than the meaning Freud made of a causal relationship between conscious intention and forgetting.

Between the “Preliminary Communication” and *Studies*, Freud published the paper just cited above, in the spring of 1894, in the same Berlin journal where his article co-authored with Breuer had appeared a year earlier. One could see this work as reflecting the desire to elaborate upon interest in the “suppression of ideas,” here adding a constituent that would prove decisive. As Freud describes the desire to forget, specifi-

cally associated here as seen in women as “pushing the thing away,” he first alludes to what is being defended against: “sexual experience and sensation” that need to be “suppress[ed]” (Freud, 1894, p. 47). It will be in his letters to Fleiss, beginning in 1895, that disavowal comes to be understood through the lens of sexuality, then later linked to a construction of repression that moves into the purview of an unconscious. Once located there, it allowed for various universalizing narratives of subjectivity. Suppression here leaves open an individual’s wish to forget, an association that will remain with the term, even as it slips from currency. This differs considerably from the forgetting of wishes, which will increasingly move away from conscious action and gain momentum as the operation of sexual fantasy. Amnesia can be said to characterize both of these states—suppression and repression—although, like the chalkboard and the *Wunderblock* they will be reckoned, psychoanalytically, to possess considerably different psychical consequences.

In characterizing repression in 1915, Freud wrote of a “cleavage” that he saw as inaugurating this mechanism and, in doing so, determining the borders of conscious and unconscious spheres (1915, p. 147). This was not, however, the first schism to occur. The ordinary break was Freud’s conscious desire to create this distinction itself, a gesture then subsumed by his enunciation of it as a prediscursive phenomenon. But it is possible to see the time before that sharp edge fell. Some of that genealogy can be gleaned from the functions he attributed to amnesia in the early, formative years of his work. What emerged, as detailed in these two essays, is a variegated surface, moving between the intentional and what he distinguished from that, and never that far from Freud’s own hand, at times erasing as he went along. Indeed, the challenge in telling the story of Freud’s *amnesie* is that part of it is just that: his own wish to forget, with its impact on both what is privileged of his own early history and on his constructions of psychical life. The resulting removals left his psychoanalytic project, like Fanny Moser’s lost memories, with experiences that haunted its edges with this absence.

## Notes

1. This letter, mistakenly attributed earlier to another recipient, was correctly identified by Christfried Tögel, who published it in the original German and with an English translation as the introduction to “My Bad Diagnostic Error: Once More About Freud and Emmy v. N. (Fanny Moser)” (1999). Tögel also presents here a persuasive argument for the dating of Freud’s encounters with Fanny Moser, reconstructing them from a variety of archival sources (p. 1171).
2. Bernheim, H. (1888). *Die Suggestion und ihre Heilwirkung* (S. Freud, Trans.). Leipzig, Vienna: Franz Deuticke.  
The preface to Freud’s translation of Bernheim’s text appeared first as a synopsis and then in a full version in two Viennese medical journals, the first in 1888 and the other in the following year. Strachey provides the details of these publications as a preface to his English version.  
See: Freud, S. (1888). Preface to the Translation of Bernheim’s *De La Suggestion*. *Standard Edition* (Vol. 1, pp. 75–87). London: Routledge.
3. In his autobiographical essay of 1925, Freud recalls this visit to Nancy, where he brought with him a patient who he hoped could be helped by Bernheim’s methods; regrettably, “he too failed” (pp. 17–18). See: Freud, S. (1959 [1929]). An Autobiographical Study. *Standard Edition*, Vol. 20, pp. (pp. 7–74). London: Hogarth Press.  
The patient, known in the *Studies* as “Frau Cäcilie M,” has been identified as Anna (von Tedesco) von Lieben; see Peter Swales’s account of his investigations that led to this conclusion: Swales, P. (1986). Freud, His Teachers, and the Birth of Psychoanalysis. In P. E. Stepansky (Ed.), *Freud: Appraisals and Reappraisals, Contributions of Freud Studies*, Vol. 1 (pp. 10ff.). Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
4. Bellamy, E. (1880). *Dr. Heidenhoff’s Process*. New York: D. Appleton.  
Swales mentions the letter to Minna in which this book is discussed (1986, pp. 35–36), but does not give a citation to the letter itself (p. 68, n.39).
5. J. Delboeuf, (November 1888). Le magnétisme animal: à propos d’une visite à l’école de Nancy. *Revue de Belgique*, 60, 241–260.  
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6. This quote is taken from the English translation: Moll, A. (1890). *Hypnotism*. London: Walter Scott, p. 123. Freud owned three German editions of this work, the first published in 1889, with revised versions following in 1890 and 1895. Despite Freud’s early interest in this aspect of Moll’s work, the subsequent relationship between the two was far from congenial: see Maehle, A. H. (2014). The powers of suggestion: Albert Moll and the debate on hypnosis. *History of Psychiatry*, 25(1), 14–15.
7. The talk appeared in Volume 34, No. 4, pp. 121–126, where it was the first article, followed a week later by a brief conclusion (Vol. 34, No. 5, pp. 166–168). Strachey gives slightly incorrect pagination for the second text in the *Standard Edition*, Vol. 3, p. 26.

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