Foreword

On November 29, 1993, *Time* asked on its cover: “Is Freud Dead?” Sigmund Freud died in 1939, so the question must bear on the “long shadow” this man cast on our century: Is psychoanalysis still viable as a proper applied science and an appropriate clinical practice in the age of biochemistry and psychotropic medications? Or is it, as critics contend, a thing of the past, an outdated nineteenth-century theory with a hopelessly ineffectual therapeutics, which ought to be confined to the dustbin of history (a popular website is entitled *Burying Freud*)? The stakes are high, and the question gets angrily debated. “Freud wars” are waged in the press, Freud exhibits are mounted and protested, anti-Freudian petitions are met by Freudian counter-petitions, thus providing the defenders of psychoanalysis with a foolproof argument: would psychoanalysis elicit such sound and fury if it weren’t alive and well?

Todd Dufresne turns this old argument on its head. Far from proving the inherent vitality of psychoanalysis, he claims that attacks against it are precisely what infuse it with life. Here Dufresne invokes Freud’s own theory of life and death, as announced in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: an organism lives only to the extent that some external excitation threatens its repose, forcing it to defend itself by erecting a “protective shield” (*Reizschutz*)—thus enabling its growth. Life, according to good Freudian doctrine, is but an annoying disturbance, a detour from the pure and simple absence of excitation,

nirvana, death. Psychoanalysis, therefore, is not alive *in spite* of its critics, but *because* of their irritating (literally exciting) attacks. Left to itself, psychoanalysis is already dying. Worse, it has always already been dead. When all is said and done, psychoanalysis reveals itself to have been a tale from the crypt.

One might find Dufresne's argument a little too clever, a little too facetious. In turning Freud's own theory against him, doesn't he simply repeat it without taking any critical distance? But that is precisely Dufresne's point: psychoanalysis is nothing but an immense defense, a *Reizschutz* against the so-called "outside." As such, the more we attack it, the more it grows and expands, one protective layer added on to the other—Kleinism, Freudism, Marxism, Lacanianism, the "hermeneutic" Freud, the "deconstructionist" Freud, and the rest. Dufresne surveys this huge and untidy literature, but he knows better than to simply critique it. Rather than adding one more critical life-support system to the ever-proliferating body of psychoanalysis, he advocates its right to die: leave it alone, let it choke to death on its own waste, like the infusorians described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Dufresne reads Freud as no other, understanding full well that psychoanalysis is fundamentally immune to criticism, because it was never concerned with reality. Critics think they inflict deadly wounds upon psychoanalysis by showing that it does not measure up to its scientific claims. But they miss the point. Psychoanalysis was never a psychological science, but rather a metapsychological fantasy, the product of Sigmund Freud's utter indifference to the world and to others. Freud often claimed, in positivistic fashion, that his metapsychological theories were mere "speculative superstructures" (1923a, 32) built on clinical "observations," and that they could "be replaced and discarded without damage" (1914b, 77) if the clinical material required it. But this is a pleasant joke: Freud never took "no" for an answer, whether it came from his patients, from his critics, or from reality itself. Freud would purely and simply dismiss evidence that contradicted his metapsychological constructions, as when Jones pressured him to drop his Lamarkian conclusions in *Moses and Monotheism*: "My position, no doubt, is made more difficult by the present attitude of biological science, which refuses [!] to hear of the inheritance of acquired characteristics by succeeding generations. I must, however, in all modesty confess that nevertheless I cannot do without this factor in biological evolution" (1939: 100).

Such an attitude is not that of a scientist, nor even that of a philosopher. It is that of the narcissistic dreamer, of "His Majesty the Ego." Dufresne puts it well: "At the end of the day, everyone plays a secondary role to the absolute narcissist that Freud imagined in his metapsychology and reserved for himself as the undisputed father of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis was his idea,

after all, his psychic apparatus projected onto the world of all Others.” Here again, one might object that Dufresne uses the very terminology of Freudian metapsychology that he attacks. But such a strategy is unavoidable, since metapsychological speculation is so radically focussed upon itself. From the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* to “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” through *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud’s metapsychology describes one and the same thing: the mind’s stubborn indifference to reality and to others, the “omnipotence of thoughts” of the “absolute narcissist,” his incorporation of all reality, of all “objects” (what I have called elsewhere the “Freudian subject”). What would be the point of arguing with Freud, the egotistical super-baby? Freud couldn’t care less. He is beyond our reach, *meta*, in the psycho-analytic yonder where he plays with us, his speculative bobbins: *Fort, da! Fort, da!* Dufresne is right: let’s leave him alone.

—Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen