SIGMUND FREUD

Wild Analysis. Edited by Adam Phillips, translated by Alan Bance. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002. 222pp. £8.99.

The publication of the first volumes of the new Penguin Classics Freud in November 2002, under the general editorship of Adam Phillips, which comprise all new translations, appealing Surrealist covers, and introductions by some of the most respected, original and engaged intellectuals of our time – Jacqueline Rose to name but one – is sure to be a significant cultural event. *Wild Analysis,* a volume collecting Freud's major ruminations on psychoanalytic method and technique from across his career, and edited by Phillips himself, emerges as perhaps *the* key text in relation to the rebranding of the series; and with this in mind, the choice of Surrealist images for the covers is highly revealing: *Wild Analysis* chooses Salvador Dali's *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy.*

This 1933 composite monochrome photograph comprises nearly 50 separate images mostly of reclining women in the throes of ecstasy: one is Bernini's *St Theresa,* some look dead, many unconvincing, and some highly irreverent – one at the top left has her tongue out. Nestled intermittently amongst these are a single art nouveau flower, six shots of faintly comical men, a chair at a jaunty angle, and some 16 close-up photographs of human ears. At first glance, Dali's image is clearly selling an image of a familiar Freud, obsessively concerned with what hysterical women want sexually. However, on consideration, a more intriguing and complex Freud emerges, and one more appropriate to the new Freud promoted by the series. That is because Dali's image locates Freud historically and methodologically somewhere between Victorian pseudo-scientist and (post)modernist theorist constantly reflecting on the nature of his own project. For example, if Dali's women recall Charcot's female patients endlessly performing their sexual and religious symptoms for a late nineteenth-century medical audience at the Salpetriere, and thus relate Freud to one of his key Victorian pseudo-scientific and religious progenitors; there is also something profoundly cinematic, and thus modern, about the repetition of the images of eroticized and dismembered female bodies, reminding us of a Freud whose *Interpretation of Dreams* coincides historically with the birth of cinema – a related form of visualizing, fantasizing and interpreting in the dark. Then there are those ears, recalling nineteenth-century comparative anthropological photographs; the influential Victorian art historian Giovanni Morelli, who claimed that one could correctly identify the works of the great masters if one sufficiently attuned oneself to the minute detail of figurative paintings, such as ears and fingernails, and with whom Freud's methods have famously been compared; and of course Darwin's identification of ears-that-moved or ears-that-were-pointed-at-the-top as evidence of humanity's close evolutionary kin and lingering primitive traits. This image of the Victorian Freud is, however, again challenged by another more modernist association for all those ears, with Freud inventing, around the time of the telephone, a curious cure based similarly on the practice of listening and speaking in an apparently disembodied fashion. The cover of *Wild Analysis* also cynically appeals to a stereotypical (heterosexual) masculine gaze, whose desire for images

of sexualized women's body parts can apparently never be gratified, and which derives principally from Freud's account of looking. However, on closer inspection, Dali's image also mocks that look: by virtue of the fact that many of the women appear to be going through the motions, and that the few men depicted for the (stereotypically heterosexual) male viewer to identify with challenge the authority of conventional masculinity, by pouting camply under unconvincing handlebar moustaches, or, in one case, by being himself examined with something like boredom or scepticism by a woman tellingly reclining on a couch.

The Janus-faced concerns of Dali's image adequately invoke the simultaneously radical/conservative image of Freud presented in both Phillips' introduction and his translator's, Alan Bance's, preface. For example, as in his other writing, Phillips' nominally gendered reader and analyst is always a woman, thus constantly undermining conventional masculinist expectations; and both Phillips' and Bance's Freud are somewhere between eminent Victorians and arch modernists: at moments authoritative and empirical, at times playfully ironizing their own project. Bance also explicitly discusses an illuminating range of problems he encountered in trying to fulfil Phillips's expressed wish that he translate Freud as if for the first time, and as he would a literary figure with a contemporary audience in mind (with presumably postmodern sensibilities). For example, Bance reveals that, to increase the reader's involvement and sense of Freud's contemporary relevance, he replaced the informal 'one' of the Standard Edition with a more informal 'you'. In line with Phillips' useful re-description of psychoanalytic 'experience' rather than 'treatment', Bance also decided to employ 'analysand' in favour of the *Standard Edition*'s 'patient', and only resorted to 'patient' as a less pathologizing alternative to the *Standard Edition*'s 'ill' or 'sick person'. Like Phillips' Freud, Bance's Freud is also not a 'scientist', but a person with strong interdisciplinary leanings, and someone who, in a revealing aside, recognizes that scientists, unlike analysts and their patients, cannot be entirely human, since their supposedly empirical method implies that they have no subjectivity. Perhaps most powerful, however, is Bance's discussion of his flirtation with the possibility of replacing the Standard Edition's 'conjecture' and 'interpret' with the more radical 'guess'. Bance, disappointingly, couldn't go through with it; nevertheless, even raising that possibility in the preface fundamentally alters the experience of the subsequent text.

Phillips himself also promotes the virtues and pleasures of close-reading Freud as a literary figure from a tacitly deconstructive perspective, rather than engaging with him more respectfully as a representative of some kind of always-already-authorized religious or demonstrably true scientific tradition. Thus, like Bance's Freud, Phillips' Freud does not know quite what he is doing, but knows that he wants to do something unprecedented, different, enjoyable, and positive. In Phillips' choice of texts, Freud also struggles to make sense of himself and his project, as well as his patients; and is a speculator, theory maker, and story teller, rather than a law maker or law giver. He is also one of a 'mad horde', rather than a respected figure in an established clinical institution. Indeed, perhaps unsurprisingly – and Phillips characteristically leaves the question of the direction of 'influence' unclear – Phillips' Freud sounds very much like Phillips himself.

Like Phillips, his Freud is, for a practitioner, oddly resistant to the idea of therapy-as-cure, and he prefers a model of psychoanalytic writing and conversation without authority, prejudice or closure, and for its own sake or as a model of a genuinely democratic exchange. Phillips' Freud is also less committed to a Romantic notion of unquestioning love or to a frankly addictive notion of the sexual fix than to the question of whether and in what ways or situations love might be useful; what in addition to hysteria is made possible when we choose not to have sex with someone else; to a version of relationship based on being understood rather than, or in addition to, being desired; and to a version of living based on broader questions of curiosity, interest, freedom and justice. Indeed, Phillips implies, the discourse *of* desire seems to have unhelpfully foreclosed both the potentially more productive Freudian discourse *on* desire and the potentially powerful democratic discourse of conversation more broadly. Phillips and Bance also see Freud in a variety of helpful new contexts and suggest that the reader go off to read other voices in other (consulting) rooms, such as Ferenczi, Rank, and Thomas Mann. (This reader would also humbly recommend Derrida's recent so-called 'ethical turn' writings, and because Phillips and Bance clearly cannot, Phillips' own *Equals*.)

There has been a long tradition of buying Penguin Classics as much for the prefatory material as the text itself, and I suspect that their new Freud will prove no exception. Indeed, in this case, the importance of the introductions cannot be overstated. That is because, in encouraging a new generation of readers to engage with Freud, and an already-established audience to buy new editions, the project has to suggest Freud's continuing relevance. Disappointingly, it is unclear when in 2002 both Phillips and Bance's introductions were submitted to Penguin, but their timeliness, at least in March 2003 when this review was written, were startling. At the end of his preface, Bance notes that one of the most significant effects of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century was its influence not on the discourse of desire but on the more humane treatment of those engaged in war. Bance recalls that, without psychoanalysis, those suffering from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder, or what was previously known as shell shock, would have been shot. For Bance, Freud remains relevant because he might help us to become still more tolerant and humane. Phillips' claims for Freud are even greater: that he promotes a model of relationship where, despite the potential for 'fanaticism' and some potentially 'explosive forces', each person seeks to free the other and is able to tolerate, and even enjoy, more conflict, but a conflict which is, importantly, life giving rather than murderous. In time of ongoing war, and if Phillips is right, can there be a better ethical reason to re-read if not Freud himself, then at least his new Penguin commentators? After all, Phillips hopes that no one voice will be privileged in the discussion of Penguin's Freud texts; and if my account of Phillips's ethical spin on Freud sounds initially unappealing or heavy handed, I am doing Phillips an injustice. It is therefore worth remembering where this review began, with the phenomenon of ecstasy, since at least for me, one of the very real *pleasures* of thinking about Freud while reading *Wild Analysis* was because of the way he seemed to bring me closer to Phillips.

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