

THE PENGUIN (or PELICAN) FREUD LIBRARY AT WESTMINSTER REFERENCE LIBRARY



I can't remember when I first started reading Freud. But I know that something about the experience triggered uncontrollable sexual urges that - as I confessed to friends - could only be quenched by 'self-satisfaction'. Actually, I used the 'M' word - without a second thought. Do people say things like that these days?

The punchline was always that I stopped “when I got to ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ and ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ ”. These fundamental and crushing essays are in *On Metapsychology*, the book with the dark blue (the dark, *inky*, blue) cover: Number 11 in the Pelican Freud Library, which was published by Penguin books between 1973-1986.^[1]

I first came across the *Penguin Freuds* while seeking something out in the Westminster Reference Library, in Orange Street,^[2] central London, although I no longer remember what that was. In my mind I see myself coming down from Birmingham, where I was studying for my B.A., to do research for my dissertation on Charles Dodgson's photography (in particular the four photographs - hand touched - of naked little girls).^[3] But it could have been later – after I'd had my daughter – and when I was wondering about stuff to do with mothering and being a mother. Then again, I was never that big on self-help. It must've been connected to writing...

Now I'm thinking that maybe it was when I was doing an MA at Goldsmiths' college, cooking up something for one of the seminars we had to present. That was when the M.A. in Fine Art consisted of about 15 people meeting once every two weeks in an old gymnasium in Camberwell. We were all in analysis, or so it seemed, and callously referred to our partners (those who hadn't already been dumped) as “Goldsmiths' widows”. It was a time of intense camaraderie, intense rivalry, and pleasures (as mentioned earlier) often solitary... reading was one of these. If nothing else, the Goldsmiths' MA turned me on to that, and I became quite fetishistically attached to the places I would do my reading in - as well as to the actual books. Hence my delight in the rooms at

Westminster (which was in fact nowhere near where I lived), and especially the 'quiet reading area' on the second floor, where I found in the *Penguin Freuds* a library within a library.

Am I making it sound as if I found reading (and especially writing) easy? I don't. My memories of being in the Westminster Reference Library consist mostly of staring into space... *dust motes glittering in the yellowing air*. Consciousness and putting down memory traces at the same time are incompatible process, says Freud. It's a wonder I got anything done. Writing lags behind thinking but experience itself can never be put into words. Like the trauma - and, as I later discovered, the operation of photography - it can only be retroactively processed.^[4]

After the invention of photography, sentence structure in the novel changed.^[5] Gustave Flaubert, for example, developed an indirect writing style which reproduced the photographic apparatus' impersonalized image of the world.^[6] He put this to work in his book about a woman who, like me, was suffering from a surfeit of reading, an excess of desire. And Freud himself was not immune to the slippery effects of words, with the case histories he recorded exceeding his control, leaving him surprised at the way they seemed not to fit the norms of science but instead turned out like novels - "like *Madame Bovary*, in fact, alongside which", as Stephen Heath insists, "Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* [the third in the Pelican collection - the one with the *orange* cover] needs to be read, and vice versa."^[7]

I eventually stopped going to the Westminster Reference Library, though I have no idea why. But buying each book whenever I found it in a second-hand store, I slowly collected all 15 colour - coded volumes of the Pelican Freud Library. I have them still.

Piece commissioned for All The Libraries: <http://www.allthelibraries.com>

¹ Psychoanalysis Wiki: The Penguin Freud Library (formerly the Pelican Freud Library) is a collection of books [now out of print] published by Penguin Books... Unlike the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, texts within the Penguin Freud Library are arranged by theme instead of in chronological order. In total there are fifteen books in the collection, edited by Angela Richards.

² Note the address listed on their website is St. Martin's Street, WC2H 7HP

³ I've seen the actual photographs, but cannot remember if this was at the V&A library or at the old British Library; under those towering circular shelves, amidst the sleeping academics. The walls in the toilets at the old British Library were covered with the most obscene graffiti I've ever come across, which probably accounted for the permanent state of heightened sexual excitement I seemed to be in at that time... although, looking back, perhaps all that was simply a side-effect of *youth?*

⁴ See my PdD: *On the Blank, Writing, Drawing, Photography* : <http://susanmorris.com/phd/>

⁵ Banfield, A. (1990) 'L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass,' *Camera Obscura* 24, Sept 1990, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina

⁶ Heath, S, (1992), *Gustave Flaubert: Madam Bovary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p52

⁷ Ibid., p 101