

A LATE CASE OF DEMONOLOGICAL POSSESSION BY FREUD
Examination of Freud's Analysis of "A Case of Demoniactal Possession in the Seventeenth Century" or: Additional support of Freud's Faust/Devil-Complex as evidenced and elucidated by Freud himself.

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In 1923 Freud attempted a psychoanalytical interpretation of the case of [Johann] Christoph Haitzmann, a destitute seventeenth century artist who claimed he had become 'demoniacally possessed'. Freud argued that the 'demon' was in fact a 'personification of the repressed unconscious instinctual life' symbolizing the subject's libidinal wishes towards his dead father. More recently, the post-Freudian school of Fairbairn (1943), Klein (1952), and Winnicott (1958) has put the emphasis rather on early familial relationships. Haitzmann's demon represents not so much repressed guilty impulses, as the internalized bad father himself. (Roy Clements Archive)

Unfortunately, my own father was one of these perverts and is responsible for the hysteria of my brother (all of whose symptoms are identifications) and those of several younger sisters. . . I shall bring a lot of strange material to Prague." **Freud/Fliess Letter, 2/8/1897**

Most importantly, it is with the Devil, Goethe's character Mephistopheles that Freud most identified. Once, while gathered with his disciples observing a painting that depicted a saint selling his soul to the Devil, Freud asked who, in their opinion, was represented by the saint and who by the Devil. Everyone replied that it was Sigmund who was the saint, to which Freud replied: "You don't know then that I am the Devil?" He further went on to exclaim: "During my lifetime I have had to play the role of the devil in order that others might construct cathedrals with the materials I have brought."⁶ (Quoted from Laforgue, R. in **Eric Miller's *Passion for Murder: The Homicidal Deeds of Dr. Sigmund Freud*** (1984))

The history of this demonological neurosis leads to a really valuable discovery which can be brought to light with much interpretive work--much as a vein of pure metal may sometimes be struck when elsewhere the ore can only be extracted after laborious smelting operations"

A Case of Demoniactal Possession in the 17th Century: Freud (1923)

I have had the unparalleled good luck to find a case of a Faust/Devil-Complex which Freud himself analyzed. The case was published in 1923 under the above named title. It is the writer's belief that a clear insight into this case, as analyzed by Freud, will add the final link to complete the confirmation of Freud's Faust/Devil-Complex. Further it is hoped that this work will add justification for the acknowledgement that the term Faust-Complex deserves full status in our psychological vocabulary.

The case of "demonological neurosis" is the clinical history of Johann Christoph Haitzmann, a painter. The case was offered to Freud by Hofrat Dr. R Payer-Thurn, director of the former Imperial Foderkommissbibliothsk of Vienna. Freud was allowed to personally inspect various documents which dealt with the case of Haitzmann-- these consisted of a letter of introduction and a manuscript in two parts, one by a monastic compiler, written in Latin, and a fragment from the patients diary. The case allegedly represents the story of Haitzmann's "redemption." Briefly the story of Haitzmann is this:

Haitzmann repeatedly became depressed and was seized with frightful convulsions while attending Church. Taken into custody he was ordered to appear to an interrogator, Praefectus Domini Pottenbrunnensis "in order to discover what was oppressing him and whether he had yielded to an impulse to have illicit traffic with the Evil One." Under interrogation Haitzmann confessed that nine years previously, despondent over his art and despairing over his livelihood, he had succumbed to "the nine-times-repeated temptation of the Evil One and had given his bond in writing to belong to the Devil body and soul at the end of nine years."

Haitzmann, we are told, regretted his bargain and became convinced that only the intervention of the Mother of God at Mariazell could save his soul and force the Devil to disgorge the bond which was formally written in blood. Haitzmann allegedly secured return of the written pact, thus releasing him from Satanic influence. The return of the pact apparently signified that Haitzmann had been redeemed and he was made an honorary brother of a holy order. Released from the "protection" of the Fathers, Haitzmann, presumably cured, went to live with his married sister for a year. A year after the "return" of the pact, however, Haitzmann once again became possessed. Once again he returned to Mariazell and once more, having confessed that there was even a second pact, he went through the ritual of being re-exorcised. His last years were spent in a monastic order.

We will not enquire into all the details surrounding this case-- though such as those presented by Freud are considered in our evaluation. The interested readers may consult these materials for themselves to judge of our interpretation.

First we will note that Freud, in his dealing with the case, abandoned his own psychoanalytic technique in key areas of his analysis.

Yet, once again, Freud has provided important insight into a complex which he himself, above all other complexes suffered from, i.e., the Faust/Devil-Complex, the selling of his soul to the Devil.

Freud informs us that he accepted the "good faith" testimony of the reverend Fathers of the Church in the presentation of the materials analyzed. There is no external evidence to substantiate this faith, indeed, the contrary is true. The material which they presented had been evidently and intentionally tampered with. Concerning this tampering Freud merely says, by way of justification:

To be sure, I incline to the view that the composer, in the interests of the conformity, has falsified part of the deposition of the first Abbot, but this secondary elaboration does not much exceed what is quite commonly perpetrated in this direction even by lay modern historians, and at all events it was done in good faith.

How does Freud know it was in good faith? His unconvincing reasons can be distilled to this: "As I said before, there was nothing to prevent their suppressing the account of the incomplete nature of the cure and the recurrence of temptation by the Evil One: moreover, the description of the redemption-scene in the shrine, about which one might have some anticipatory apprehension, is in fact soberly given and inspires confidence."

Remark #1: In the interests of "conformity" the Church officials in corrupting the documents did nothing more than modern lay historians. Neither the corruptions of modern lay historians or Church officials can be permissibly offered in "defense" of corrupt and dishonest practices whose sole purpose is mendacious deception—in neither case does it inspire confidence.

Remark #2: Freud's assumption of the "good faith" of the reverend Fathers focuses on his belief that they could have suppressed altogether the continued illness, and could have concealed even further the truth. We have no way of knowing if the Church could have concealed the truth altogether as Freud would have us believe. It may be, and probably was, that the case was more than a little famous in the area, especially since after Haitzmann's initial "redemption" he was made a brother of their holy order—a fact concealed by Freud in this context.

Significant Facts Slighted By Freud

#1: Was Haitzmann taken voluntarily to Mariazell the first or the second time? He was "taken," we are told after being interrogated by the Praefectus Domini Pottenbrunnensis. Assuming Haitzmann was still in a delusional state of mind we may deduce that his journey was not entirely voluntary by any recognized legal standard, then or now.

Question: Was it Haitzmann's own idea that he could be saved by the intervention of the Mother of God at Mariazell, as represented by Freud, or was the idea "suggested" to him by his interrogator, who, apparently was the first to suggest to Haitzmann that he was under the influence of the Evil One. It was the Praefectus Domini Pottenbrunnensis who ordered the interrogation and there is nothing to suggest that Haitzmann volunteered for it. We have no way of knowing the full contents of the abbots introductory letter to the Fathers at Mariazell, but whatever they were, we need not be deterred from believing it was an involuntary act on the part of Haitzmann.

#2: It is only after being interrogated that Haitzmann confessed his pact with the Devil. Under threatening duress he probably admitted to a written pact. But, for some unknown reason, Haitzmann was "allowed" to go to the Mariazell because he (allegedly) had the idea that only there could he be freed from his pact. One wonders, was this also suggested to him? If it was suggested, what opinion did Haitzmann have as one who confessedly was in pact with Satan? If it was suggested by Haitzmann, who was obviously "possessed," why would the Church so compliantly yield to his desires? The fact that Freud mentioned that he had been "consigned to the benevolence of the fathers of Mariazell" leaves the matter in little doubt. A subject not a free man is "consigned."

#3: The illustrations which we are offered in proof of Haitzmann's Devil possession are not originals but copies, "exact copies we are solemnly assured." Since we are not in possession of the originals (presumably still located in the archives of the Catholic Church) we cannot judge if they are indeed exact copies. This is hearsay. Neither, to my knowledge, do we have any of Haitzmann's other artistic works (i.e., other than those presented to Freud for examination), so in any regard, we would have a difficult time deciding the issue. Where are the originals and why did Freud not examine them?

#4: Freud says concerning conflicting evidence; "Either we must assumed that the painter himself drew up, at the time when we stood in need of them, both of the Schedae which, he alleged, were returned by the Grace of God, or else we must, despite all solemn assurances, sealed testimony of witnesses and so on discount the credentials of the ecclesiastics of Mariazell and St. Lambert." As the authorities were found responsible already of corrupting the original texts the fact that the testimony was sealed in nowise adds to their credibility. If Haitzmann was taken against his will the fact he allegedly produced *two pacts* "at the time he stood in the need of them" again does not add validity to the assertions of the Father's whose testimony is all dedicated to the premise that Haitzmann was indeed possessed by Satan.

#5: The Two Pacts: the logical problem of the two documents allegedly proving that Haitzmann actually made two agreements with the Devil, is precisely this: Since both documents bear the same date: 1669, we are confronted with the situation that the stories offered (presumably) by Haitzmann to explain the question at issue, namely his illicit traffic with the Evil One-- are in contradiction. We may seek to

explain away the contradiction but the contradictions remain whatever explanations are given for why they exist.

The above being the case, we are confronted by certain problems; 1) that Haitzmann consciously or unconsciously made a mistake in the dating of the second document (i.e., giving it the same year); 2) that someone else, in contradiction to the testimony of the fathers, made a mistake in dating the document; 3) that in the "interests of conformity" the obfuscation was intentional to avoid embarrassment to the Church and to offer cause why a complete redemption had not occurred in an effort to exclude why a complete redemption had not occurred, as announced by the fathers.

While one might think that such confusion could not be in the interests of the Church, particularly in cases such as these, the thought should not be ruled out. Obviously if the full truth were known the Church could not have accepted that the pacts were actually made with Satan in the first place! Or, from another point of view, *two* exorcisms would be an embarrassment to the Church in any regard—as obviously the first one, claimed to have worked by the Church did not. And the embarrassment to the Church, it would seem, would be more acute since the second time Haitzmann made a pact with the Devil he was already an honored brother of the Holy order.

We will now attempt to reconstruct the story of Haitzmann that can be garnered from Freud's given information from another point of view. We shall employ the same information used by Freud but in a rearranged context believed more consistent with pertinent facts and time frame at issue. The story may be recapitulated as below:

On Aug. 29, 1667 Christoph Haitzmann while attending church was stricken with a convulsive seizure. For some reason the facts surrounding this event caused the case to come to the immediate attention of the Praefectus Domini Pottenbrunnensis. An interrogation was ordered and Haitzmann was brought before him to determine if Haitzmann had yielded "to an impulse to have illicit traffic with the Evil One." Obviously ill, under interrogation, he confessed to what appears to have been a previous assumption of the Church, that Haitzmann had made a pact with the Devil. It is this alleged pact with the Devil by which the Church was seeking to explain the poor man's seizures. Here we would note that it was the convulsions in Church which had brought Haitzmann under suspicion. We will leave it to the reader to wonder if this suspicion existed prior to the convulsions or if the simple convulsions themselves *caused* the suspicion. This critical piece of information is not even considered by Freud. At any rate, under the interrogation of the Praefectus Domini Pottenbrunnensis, Haitzmann "confessed" that nine years previously, despondent over his art and in despair about his livelihood he yielded to the temptations of Satan.

The Church officials who prepared the biographic documents of Haitzmann's case additionally offer that he was *also* depressed over the recent (i.e., nine years previously) death of his father. Further, that the pact was to have had its contractual fulfillment on the 24 of September and that Haitzmann regretted his bargain and was convinced that only the intercession of the Mother of God at Mariazell could save his eternal soul. At Mariazell Haitzmann believed the Devil would disgorge the Bond, which was written in blood. Haitzmann was taken to Mariazell allegedly in compliance with "his" own wishes.

A full ceremony of exorcism was planned. Precisely at midnight in the Holy Shrine of Mariazell on Sept. 8, 1667 the Devil reportedly appeared in the form of a winged dragon and gave Haitzmann back his pact. We are informed that prior to this "miracle" Haitzmann underwent a "prolonged period of expiation and prayer" and that either due to ritual reasons, or from weakness, Haitzmann tore himself away from the "supporting arms of the fathers" and rushed into a corner of the chapel where the "miracle" occurred. He returned with the pact in hand, dated 1669. The event must have been considered wonderful. Not only had Haitzmann been cured but for his efforts he was made a Brother of the Holy Order. Apparently the good fathers did not witness Haitzmann's successful encounter with the Devil—only the alleged result, namely, the "pact in hand" that he returned to them.

As the story goes, Haitzmann left Mariazell, miraculously redeemed by the Mother of God Herself. No doubt it was the biggest miracle ever witnessed at Mariazell. If the exorcisers had also seen this event, Freud states that we would have to be "confronted by several disturbing possibilities, the least disagreeable of which would be that of a collective hallucination."

However, the clergy are saved from this "disagreeable" situation because we can presume that Haitzmann's Devil was not visible to them in the corner. In other words, solely on Haitzmann's word they accepted his story that the Devil did deliver the Bond to him as he presumably told them. Their credulity went so far that they not only accepted the story but even made him a fellow Brother in the Holy Order. Certainly, though, they saw the "pact" which he apparently delivered over to the good fathers. Well, a half a miracle, for them, at least, was apparently better than no miracle at all. And who wants to see a Devil anyway? (Would Freud have found it "disagreeable" if Haitzmann had actually secreted a pact in his clothes and then pretended to have gotten it from the Devil in the miracle—to please the good fathers?)

We can see from this how discouraging it must have been to them when Haitzmann's miraculous cure began to deteriorate; a few months after leaving Mariazell, Haitzmann once again was seized with convulsions. Yet, this time it was not the Devil who tormented him, it was sacred personages, i.e., Christ himself and the Holy Virgin herself. He suffered no less from these visitations than he did from the Devil. Here the plot thickens. We should be prompted to inquire into this new turn of events. The first question which rises is this: what happened at Mariazell? From

Oct. 11 to January 13, 1678 Haitzmann (now Brother Chrysostomus) kept a diary of his inner trials, the contents of which are the most interesting. He is tempted (apparently by the Devil) to give us his document attesting "his admission to the Brotherhood of the Holy Rosary." He is begged to become the King, etc.

After these temptations, Christ allegedly appears to him and commands him to "forswear this wicked world and to serve God in a desert for a period of six years." The painter clearly suffered more from these holy visions than from the earlier devilish apparitions. On another occasion, we are told, Christ leads him into hell to terrify him with fear of eternal damnation. This availing not enough, Christ prevails on him with promises. Haitzmann decided to do as he is instructed. But there is yet another phase. After having a lascivious thought while performing his devotions in Church, Haitzmann then is struck that night like "a bolt from the blue." He sees flames swallowing him up. He grovels in his room till blood flowed from his nose and mouth. "Later he was scourged by evil spirits with ropes and informed that the punishment would be repeated every day until he decided to enter the holy order of anchorites.

During what Freud calls the "ascetic phase" of his neurosis, another interesting hallucination occurs. "After the threat that, should he not prove more amenable, something would come to pass (which) both he and the people would be bound (to) believe, he says directly that 'I should not heed the people if they would persecute me or give me no succor, God would not forsake me.'"

It is here that credulity reaches its peak. Haitzmann, we are told to believe, now fabricates yet *another* story, identical to the first. That he had a year *before* the "original" pact with the Devil signed *another* earlier pact. *There were two pacts all the time.* It was the second pact, written in blood, which the Mother of God returned. The even older pact (10 years ago-- a year overdue) was the one he was now suffering from. Haitzmann (or the good fathers?) believed the miracle had to be repeated. Haitzmann went, or was taken ("consigned to the benevolence of the fathers") once again to Mariazell. The ritual was repeated, under circumstances of which we are not informed, and Haitzmann having had the benefit already of the divine intercession of the Mother of God once again reaped her benefits. At last we a new and hopefully better miracle. Only not quite--for when Haitzmann yielded himself to the role of the "stern anchorite and the ascetic" he continued to be plagued by Satan when he had a little too much wine! Well, there are miracles, and then there are miracles.

There are a mass of details which we could inquire into but we are not really so interested in Haitzmann. Our concern for another human being, however, does compel us to wonder if Haitzmann was another one of those poor unfortunates who suffered actual tortures at the hands of the Medieval Church. Manifest in his visions may be the content of the fear he suffered at the hands of his interrogators and exorcisers. It is clear that Haitzmann became a stern anchorite due to an excessive fear (perhaps

justified) that if he did not do as he was told he would be daily punished until he agreed. In any regard, the case of Haitzmann is altogether an embarrassment to the Catholic Church. Haitzmann died in 1700 and the compilation of the materials which Freud analyzed took place not less than 14 years *after* his death and as much as 29 years later.

What does the Devil ordinarily have to offer?: "wealth, immunity from danger, power over mankind, and over the forces of nature, but above all these pleasure, the enjoyment of beautiful women." But what were Haitzmann's reasons for making a pack with the Devil, in the first place, and selling his soul to the Evil One? Freud tells us "remarkable to relate, it was not for any one of these very natural desires." In corroboration of this opinion Freud quotes from Haitzmann's remarks which accompanied his illustrations of the events-- all of them tell us that though he was tempted by wealth, immunity from danger, power over mankind etc. Haitzmann *refused* these temptations.

Let us look at the question soberly: the temptations offered by the Devil, sprung from the delusional mind of Haitzmann, represent exactly things which he desired. If psychoanalysis has taught us anything, it has taught us this as Freud claims:

It is clear that we are really dealing with a morbid state of health, and further, the painter himself, in the legends appended to his illustrations actually describes it as melancholia ('that I should seek diversion and banish melancholy') The fact that Haitzmann was suffering from melancholy does not confuse the issue of his desires-- the fulfillment of which cause him to be despondent. Other factors, such as his father's death, may have also contributed to his despondency.

Further Freud tells us:

This man sold himself to the Devil, therefore, in order to be free from a state of depression. Truly an excellent motive, in the judgment of those who can understand the torment of these states and who appreciate, moreover, how little the art of medicine can do to alleviate the malady.

To sell oneself, one's very soul, to one's Devil-neurosis because of depression is hardly an "excellent" motive--presuming we are dealing with a volitional act, which is doubtful--whatever the opinion of those who, apparently like Freud, "understand the torment."

It is very interesting to note Freud's reaction to this case. On a number of occasions he refers to the "exciting" cause of Haitzmann's neurosis. He imputes nothing but good will to the Church and expressed the opinion that, "He entered a holy order, where his inner conflict as well as his material want came to an end." Freud apparently forgets the

little detail that when Haitzmann drank a little too much wine, he continued to suffer from Satanic hallucinations. On numerous occasions Freud uses the word "redemption" to describe the exorcisms, redemption is a religious term: i.e., "After his redemption," Freud wrote, "the melancholia seems to have been overcome and all the longing of a worldly rise up once more."

What is most remarkable about Freud's analysis of Haitzmann is that Freud offers insight into the Faust-Devil Complex, his own. I am convinced that a careful reader will see Freud's rather curious perspective on this case and will note that the assumptions which he makes are derived as much from his own unconscious associations as they are from the presumed and obviously fraudulent "facts" of the case.

Perhaps most interesting of all is how closely Haitzmann's "biography" parallels the biography of Freud himself. We will briefly note some of these similarities: Freud too suffered from persecution, despaired over his art and profound fears about his livelihood. He had dreams about dumplings, great hostility toward his father, a mother dependence, "unconscious" attachment to the Catholic Church, along with malignant hostilities toward religion, adopted a father-substitute (Faust's Devil) and ended his life in seclusion under the protection of the Church. The words Freud used to sum up the life of Haitzmann might as well have applied to himself:

All he wanted was security in life, at first with the help of Satan but at the cost of eternal bliss; then when this failed and had to be abandoned with the Church's help but at the cost of his freedom and most of the pleasures of life.

But let us pass to other matters. The following extracted quotes from *A Case of Demonological Possession*, reflective of Freud's own psychopathological perspectives, include:

"Amongst all the observations concerning the mental life of children which psychoanalysis has made, there is hardly one which sounds so repugnant and incredible to the normal adult as the boy's feminine attitude to the father and the phantasy of pregnancy derived from it." (p. 284)

"The interests at stake in the conflict giving rise to neurosis are either purely libidinal or have a close libidinal relation of self-preservation. In all three instances the dynamics of the neurosis are identical. Libido, damned up and unable to secure real gratification finds discharge through the repressed unconscious by the help of regression to old fixations." (299)

"The feminine attitude of the father became repressed as soon as the boy realized that his rivalry with the women for the father's love implies the loss of his own male genital, that is to say, implied castration." (283)

"In his mourning for the departed father, and its intensification of the longing for him, the long since repressed phantasy of a pregnancy is reawakened in our painter, which he must then defend himself against by means of a neurosis and by denigrating the father." (293)

"When we bring this ambivalence into the foreground, however, we become prepared for the possibility of the father being denigrating in such a way as comes to the expression in the painter's demoniacal neurosis."
(280)

"But that the Devil is an image of the father and can act as an understudy for him has never been so clearly apparent as in the case of our neurotic seventh-century painter." (279)

"When one people vanquished another, the overthrown gods of the conquered become not infrequently the evil spirits of the victors."
(278)

"I daresay sober-minded critics will not be prepared to admit that by reversing the sense of the Satanic pact we have made the matter clear."
(274)

"All the instincts, the loving, the grateful, the sensual, the defiant, the self-assertive and independent-- are all gratified in the wish to be the father of himself."
(274)

Dr. Reich: ... He smoked very much, very much. I always had the feeling he smoked-- not nervousness, not nervousness-- but because he wanted to say something which never came over his lips. Do you get the point?... As if he had 'to bite something down.' Now I don't know whether you are on my line. Bite-- a biting down impulse, swallow something down, never to express it. He was always very polite, 'bitingly' polite, sometimes."
p.20-21

"It is most noteworthy that Freud's simple style in his first papers of the 1890's became more and more involved, academic, and "Goethean" [sic., Mephistophelian/Diabolical] as the decades passed by."
p. 240

Reich Speaks of Freud
Ed. Mary Higgins and
Chester M. Raphael, M.D.

POSTSCRIPT: MAY 6, 2009:

What Freud could not confess to, why he had to constantly “bite down on was that he, too, made a pack with the Devil but, unlike poor Haitzmann, Freud became a murderer. Reich when he spoke the above quoted words could not have known that Freud himself wrote in a private letter to his like-wise demonical friend, Dr. Fliess,

It's a pity one must always keep one's mouth shut
about the most intimate details in one's life.

And, after writing this, he next immediately added, quoting (actually, to his purpose, misquoting**) the Devil in Goethe's play *Faust*:

Das Beste was Du weisst,
Darfst du den Buben doch nicht sagen

**The best that you already know
You must never tell to Johns: never!**

(author's translation)

Freud, Letter to Fliess, December 3, 1897

** See my website for analysis of the misquotation
at www.passionformurder.com

THE ABOVE ARTICLE (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF INTRODUCTORY QUOTATIONS AND ONLY A HANDFUL OF ADDED WORDS) WAS WRITTEN SOME 7 YEARS BEFORE MY BOOK *PASSION FOR MURDER* (1984) AND LONG BEFORE DISCOVERY OF FREUD'S MURDER OF JOHN FREUD AND MANY OTHER, PROBABLY INCLUDING HIS FATHER.

FOR GREATER AND ENRICHING DETAIL THE READER IS RECOMMENDED TO VISIT THE SITE OF CHRISTIAN RENOUX'S EXCELLENT ARTICLE “FREUD AND THE HAIZMAN AFFAIR.” UNFORTUNATELY, SO FAR AS I KNOW, IT IS ONLY PUBLISHED IN FRENCH. THIS AUTHOR WILL COMPLETELY UPDATE THIS ARTICLE UTILIZING HIS VALUABLE WORK AT SOME FUTURE TIME. SEE CHRISTIAN RENOUX'S ARTICLE AT WWW.PSYCHOANALYTISCHEPERSPECTIEVEN.BE (SEE AT THAT SITE “ON-LINE PAPERS”:
(*Freud et l'affaire Haizmann*)