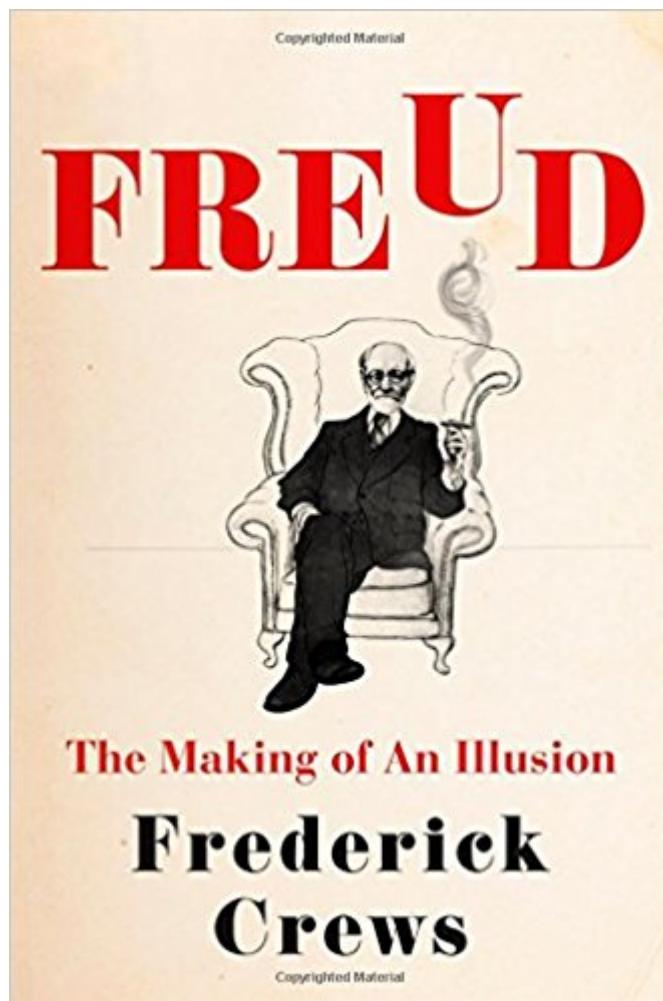


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Freud: The Making Of An Illusion



Synopsis

From the master of Freud debunkers, the book that definitively puts an end to the myth of psychoanalysis and its creator Since the 1970s, Sigmund Freud's scientific reputation has been in an accelerating tailspin—but nonetheless the idea persists that some of his contributions were visionary discoveries of lasting value. Now, drawing on rarely consulted archives, Frederick Crews has assembled a great volume of evidence that reveals a surprising new Freud: a man who blundered tragicomically in his dealings with patients, who in fact never cured anyone, who promoted cocaine as a miracle drug capable of curing a wide range of diseases, and who advanced his career through falsifying case histories and betraying the mentors who had helped him to rise. The legend has persisted, Crews shows, thanks to Freud's fictive self-invention as a master detective of the psyche, and later through a campaign of censorship and falsification conducted by his followers. A monumental biographical study and a slashing critique, *Freud: The Making of an Illusion* will stand as the last word on one of the most significant and contested figures of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Freud: The Making of an Illusion [is] a . . . stake driven into its subject's cold, cold heart. . . . Crews is an attractively uncluttered stylist, and he has an amazing story to tell.” Louis Menand, *The New Yorker* “A powerful and thorough takedown of Sigmund Freud.” Vulture “Crews [is] going in for the kill. A damning

portrait. "Diligently documented . . . neither sensationalized nor ranting . . . a scorching summation." The Chronicle of Higher Education "An elegant and relentless exposé . . . Impressively well-researched, powerfully written, and definitively damning. Crews wields his razor-sharp scalpel on Freud's slavish followers, in particular, who did not want to see or who willfully redacted the sloppiness of Freud's research methods in order to idealize him." Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review) "Crews relentlessly shreds the deceptions that Freudians even now try to maintain. . . . This thorough dismantling of one of modernity's founding figures is sure to be met with controversy." Booklist (Starred Review) "A stunning indictment . . . this fascinating biographical study paints a portrait of Freud as a man who cared more about himself than his patients and more about success than science." Publishers Weekly "For those who worship Freud, and even those millions who have simply admired his ideas, Crews' rigorous and captivating detective work will be a bracing challenge." Elizabeth Loftus, co-author of *The Myth of Repressed Memory* "A riveting, masterful biography . . . Delving deeply into hitherto suppressed archival material, Crews paints an unforgettable portrait of an utterly incompetent psychotherapist whose ruthless pursuit of wealth and fame led him to disregard the welfare of his patients as well as the scruples of scientific method." Richard J. McNally, author of *What Is Mental Illness?* "Frederick Crews tells the riveting story of how a troubled, insecure, but supremely ambitious doctor stumbled from one therapeutic fantasy to another before hitting on the one that made him famous. Crews is a master narrator, and he has put his finger on the key factor in Freud's career?the remarkable series of intense, morally fraught, and truly bizarre relationships (collegial, therapeutic, and sexual) that kept Freud going as his theories proved ever resistant to confirmation." John Farrell, author of *Freud's Paranoid Quest* "One has to admire Crews' story: the way he tells it, and the marvelous blending of the different sources." Malcolm Macmillan, author of *Freud Evaluated: The Completed Arc* "The Freudian myth?one of the thought-deforming tyrannies of the 20th century?is hereby at an end. This book is as exhilarating as the fall of the Berlin wall." Stewart Justman, author of *The Psychological Mystique* "In this painstaking study, Frederick Crews reveals just what a huge intellectual Ponzi scheme the elaborate Freudian business represented." Paul McHugh, author of *The Mind has Mountains: Reflections on Society and Psychiatry* "Making use of newly available correspondence, and new readings of previously available material, Crews reveals a pattern of misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and

mendacity that characterized the Freudian enterprise right from the beginning. John F. Kihlstrom, editor of *Functional Disorders of Memory* "This riveting and masterful reassessment puts the final nail in the coffin of Sigmund Freud's misguided career by meticulously documenting his willful descent into pseudoscience. Altogether a fascinating read!" Frank J. Sulloway, author of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*

Frederick Crews is the author of many books, including the bestselling satire *The Pooh Perplex* and *Follies of the Wise*, which was a finalist for a National Book Critics Circle award. He is also a professor emeritus of English at the University of California, Berkeley, a longtime contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Specifically, Crews hopes to deploy the "science of psychoanalysis" through a wholesale dismantling of every aspect and feature. In exhaustive detail he shows that virtually every single breath that Freud took was based on some secret deception, some fraud, some deceit, some drug use. All this is quite entertaining as far as it goes for those of us who enjoy reading about Freud and picking up some new details (his remarks about Swales' work is very helpful, as we have all been waiting for his biography of Fliess), but the relentless focus on the goal of destroying psychoanalysis seems misplaced. The classic psychoanalytic doctrine has now broadened into psychoanalytic psychotherapy, a much broader discipline of which Crews has nothing to say. Further, psychoanalysis as a philosophy of human nature is so very rich and interesting that clinicians hardly need buy it hook line and sinker as was the case perhaps seventy-five years ago. Hammering the Freud of *Studies on Hysteria*, his earliest published work, is akin to hammering Copernicus or Newton. The fact remains (and it is a fact, that Crews doesn't go near) is that Freud as a commentator on human nature is inherently interesting and worthwhile pursuing. Any practicing clinician like myself, of thirty five years, recognises that.

Employing magisterial research and lucid prose, this important new book by Fred Crews renders intellectually impossible any effort to construct a plausible argument about psychological behavior based on Freud's findings. Self-contradictory, lacking in empirical validity, and poisoned by Freud's deviousness and manipulative obsessions, those findings give us nothing stable on which to assemble a compelling theory of the human mind. This is the substance of the book; a

helpful way to understand it is to see it as the case for the prosecution. The defenders of Freud, many of them, will ignore what the book reveals and will instead continue to look around for something salvageable in the broken crockery of Freud's career. They will find in him "a poet of the mind" or "an intrepid explorer of the inner hidden life" or they will remind us of the existence of "the unconscious," an entity that Freud did not invent and the existence of which Crews hardly denies. But they will not, because at the end Freud did not, champion entities he once deemed central but later jettisoned: "seduction theory" or the "Oedipal triangle" or the centrality of youthful masturbation as a key to adult psychological behavior. The case for the prosecution finds in Freud a non-scientific and anti-empirical entrepreneur of illusions. Crews' book exposes the burden that defenders of Freud must shoulder. The evidence he assembles makes easy the job of the prosecution.

Not having been a participant in the Freud Wars and coming to this topic afresh, it strikes me as being clearly a brilliant interdisciplinary text which anyone interested in the history of science, the history of medicine, or the history of ideas should find consistently engrossing for the entire 666 pages. My intuition is that many of those more notable public reviews which are largely negative have been written by people who have become bored with the topic and, as a result, failed to do more than skim this marvelous work. It should not be the least bit tedious to the reader is genuinely interested in this entire historical era. Every section is filled with intriguing insights which the negative reviewers seem to feel unimportant to acknowledge, assuming they were absorbed at all.

Crews has made it his life's work to take down Freud in any way possible. And book after book has gotten a lot of coverage in the press. Here what we get is a scathing attempt to depict every breath Freud took as a lie based on some nefarious inner demon. Does the gentleman protest too much? Methinks so. He seems to believe that if a writer or theorist has human failings his theories cannot possibly be valid. But of course, contemporary psychoanalysts know full well that many of Freud's ideas need to be thrown out. But what Freud left us is a totally new way of looking at our own inner worlds, with such concepts as unconscious motivations revolutionizing how we think of psychological processes. Crews himself says he was a one-time devotee of Freud. Apparently he could not forgive his idol for not living up to Crews's idealizations. He's written this book over and over. Repetition compulsion? Who knows?

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