



Figure 1. Lydia Marinelli in 2006 [Copyright: Andreas Mayer]
Taken in the Sala de las Batallas at El Escorial, near Madrid, Spain. The painting shows the victorious Armada in the battle of Terceira Island (1582).

In Memoriam: Lydia Marinelli (1965–2008)

**THE HISTORIAN OF THE FREUD MUSEUM:
LYDIA MARINELLI¹**

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The Freud Museum in Vienna is certainly one of the best-known tourist attractions of Europe, drawing crowds of visitors every year. Over the past 15 years, it has also acquired a reputation for being the site of some of the most inventive intellectual work in the history of psychoanalysis. A set of highly original exhibitions, film and lecture series, and conferences all set a new tone that was unheard of in Vienna, a city where Sigmund Freud had been turned, as had so many other of the great figures of Austria's glorious past, into a piece of merchandise. It took the scholarly world and the larger public some time to realize that this fresh and courageous approach was the work of a young historian who was not even Viennese, but had arrived from the Eastern part of the Tyrol.

Those who wanted to pay Lydia Marinelli a visit and were not familiar with the house that had become a museum had a hard time finding her. They had to pass through a secret wooden door that led them into an improvised kitchen, continue down a small corridor and cross the library to find her in a small room located in the last corner. It was not a coincidence that she had chosen the former bedroom of Freud's sister-in-law Minna Bernays as her office where books and boxes piled up. She did not hesitate to satisfy the curiosity of many of her visitors about the fact that Minna could reach

1. See Figure 1.

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her own bedroom only through that of her sister and her brother-in-law. She was rather amused about the persisting rumours about an affair between Sigmund and Minna and had only a wry smile for the zealous attempts of those who wanted to prove or disprove yesterday's gossip.

Trained as a historian at the University of Vienna, with a thorough knowledge of philosophy, literature and the fine arts, she had embarked on a quite risky journey, trying to bring a sense of serious scholarship to what among the historical profession was (and often still is) regarded as a rather tacky business: psychoanalysis.

When I first met her in 1994, I was not only impressed by the scope of her knowledge, but also by the ease with which she would establish the most unexpected connections. With a few strokes, she was able to sketch a portrait of Freud that had nothing to do with the shabby folklore displayed in the official part of the museum. When the museum opened its doors in 1971, Anna Freud only donated the furniture of the waiting room, a few memorabilia (among them her father's cap whose weird destiny Marinelli traces in a vignette [Marinelli 2009]), and a small sample of the collection of antiques that her father had taken with him to London when he and his family went into exile in 1938. The rest of the empty space was then filled with huge photographs of Freud's consulting room and office. These had to stand in for the absence of the material elements of the psychoanalytic setting, most notably the famous couch. In such a place of enforced invocation, Lydia Marinelli made it her task to reflect upon the troubled relationship between this constitutive absence and an institution that aimed to anchor a representation of its collective past in it. This endeavour could only be carried out by someone who did not belong to the 'family' of psychoanalysts.

One of her greatest advantages—and the key to her intellectual freedom—was that she had arrived as a stranger and managed to keep a certain distance from the constant quarrelling inside the house. Another was her strong historical sensibility, allowing her to develop a very distinctive position that only few have been able to maintain: the role of the intelligent and fair critic of psychoanalysis. She always combined an acute awareness of the museum's conflictual past and present with a strict refusal either to fetishize or to condemn the work and life of Freud. In that sense, her project was indebted to the work of the late Michel de Certeau, a historian whom she greatly admired and whose last book I translated into German in the mid-1990s at her suggestion (Certeau [1987] 1997). Ten years after his premature death, it seemed urgent to take up questions and ideas within a research programme that would detail the specificities of psychoanalytic knowledge and its transmission in relation to the turbulent and often violent conflicts within the profession's societies.

At the time of our first meeting, Lydia Marinelli was preparing a small, very fine exhibition about the International Psychoanalytic Publishing

House (Marinelli 1995). She was the first to address in an exhibition the social and material technologies of transmission that mattered so critically for the first generation of psychoanalysts. As always, her work as a curator was closely linked to a larger intellectual project, in this case her PhD, which she submitted in 1999 at the University of Vienna.² This first work provided her with the leitmotiv that runs through most of her further intellectual interventions: How can one reconstruct the material conditions of a scientific and therapeutic enterprise whose object is the most evanescent and recalcitrant? She never pursued this project in a way that reduced the ideas and methods of Freud and his followers to their social or economic conditions; rather, she shed light on the manifold ways of mediating the unconscious. At a time when psychoanalysis was still identified with a body of texts, defined by a largely unquestioned canon and its hermeneutics, such an enterprise not only problematized the canonization of certain texts but also raised questions about the use of printed matter and the making public of intimate affairs. In contrast to text-centred approaches, her perspective made it possible to relate the production and dissemination of books to the intellectual and social community of the early psychoanalytic movement. The result was a dynamic understanding of knowledge production as a collective process in which the patients held a prominent part, not as victims or gullible believers, but as active participants and often as intelligent critics of psychoanalytic theories and methods.

When Fischer Verlag asked me in early 1998 to prepare a collection of essays to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Die Traumdeutung*, I was very happy that she agreed to take on the adventure of co-writing with me a longer article about the history of the book through all its eight editions. Adventurous it was, because the work had to be done within a year and took place between Frankfurt, Cambridge and Vienna. It was my most intense and satisfying intellectual experience. Reading and comparing all eight editions yielded one surprise after another, discovering the various threads that led from textual differences to different members of the early psychoanalytic movement and then to their conflicts with Freud over the theory of dreams. Within a few months, the article had become a little book, first published in an abridged version (Marinelli & Mayer 2000) and then, two years later, as a separate volume with a number of sources appended (Marinelli & Mayer 2003).

But the constitution of canonical texts was only one aspect of Lydia Marinelli's historical elucidation of the various mediators of the unconscious. A second important area was the use of visual technologies,

2. The title of this dissertation was 'Psyches Kanon. Zur Publikationsgeschichte der Psychoanalyse rund um den Internationalen Psychoanalytischen Verlag'. In recent months, she had prepared the manuscript for publication as a book which will appear posthumously.

photography, and film in particular. Already as a student, she had helped found a journal devoted to the uses of photographic evidence in history.³ The journal disappeared rather soon, but her interest in the topic remained alive and inspired some of her most original work on the cinematic representation of the unconscious. Well informed about the most recent theories of film that were heavily influenced by psychoanalysis, she refused to apply them to the products of early cinema and even to the first psychoanalytic documentaries. Two of her articles (Marinelli 2004, 2006a), the first elements of a book, demonstrate how fruitful it can be for the historian just to look and to restore the particular and often peculiar logic of representation at work here. Instead of reading the early cinematic depiction of dreams through the lens of Freud's dream theory, she located them in a larger framework of theories of the wish in the late-nineteenth century, by drawing unexpected links between symbol lexicons, the gambling business, and the changes of visual technologies. The commonplace that dreams are like films gave way to an analysis that shows how a set of technological practices came to shape Western conceptions of unconscious memory and its manifestations (Marinelli 2004). Choosing obscure films, such as the first psychoanalytic documentary shot by Philip Lehrman during his own analysis with Freud in the late 1920s, allowed her to detail how different layers of self-referentiality finally undercut any hope of gaining access to an unambiguous reality on the screen. The film appears at once as the archival trace of the major figures of the psychoanalytic movement, as a private home-movie for the 'family' of psychoanalysts, and as a symptomatic result of Lehrman's own obsession with filming Freud the analyst (Marinelli 2006a).

The third and most visible area of Lydia Marinelli's work were her exhibitions, true experimental enterprises in the cultural history of the psychoanalytic object world. Beside her other scholarly work and smaller exhibition projects, she managed to curate three major exhibitions over a period of eight years: *'Meine... alten und dreckigen Götter'. Aus Sigmund Freuds Sammlung* ['My old and dirty Gods'] (1998–99) where for the first time items from the London Freud Museum were on display in Vienna; *'Freuds verschwundene Nachbarn'* ['Freud's vanished neighbours'] (2003) and an exhibition on the history of that ultimate emblem of psychoanalysis, the couch (*'Die Couch. Vom Denken im Liegen'* [Marinelli 2006b]). Seeing her at work at a fast pace and often under stressful conditions, I admired her patience, grace and her great sense of teamwork. She knew instinctively which task she had to assign to a certain member of the team, not only to

3. The first issue of *Photographie und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für photographische Imagologie* (edited by the historians Gerhard Jagschitz and Carl Aigner) appeared in 1989 and contains a review of Wolfgang Ruppert's *Fotogeschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, possibly Marinelli's first publication.

the benefit of the final result, but also to spur his or her own individual curiosity. I was always grateful when she had a task for me, for it usually set me on a track I had overlooked and enabled me to reach new insights in my own research. I also noted her impressive diplomatic (and even therapeutic) skills when objects from the Freud Museum in London had to be temporarily transferred to Vienna in 1998, a process that would have failed had she not successfully negotiated to achieve an interim truce between the two directors. To install an image of Freud and psychoanalysis that departed from the received view proved to be a challenging and laborious business.

If one wanted to capture the general tactics of these adventurous and courageous journeys into the psychoanalytic past in a single phrase, it would be the attempt to fight the 'stultification' that pervaded the celebration of Sigmund Freud in Vienna, but also elsewhere. Lydia knew that every detail in a display – the concrete placement of objects, their relationship with the accompanying text, the possibilities of a visitor moving through the space – needed the most careful tuning of attention in order to enable those little surprises that spur our process of learning and discovery. Her exhibitions were ingenious devices that operated those 'tricks of evidence' that Walter Benjamin once qualified as the surest remedy against the dull work of mere illustration.⁴

It was through these exhibitions and then through a set of scientific conferences she initiated and organized (*Psychoanalysis as Science* (1996); *Forgetting Freud? How to Write the History of Psychoanalysis Today* (2004); *Lachen mit Freud* (2007)) that the Freud Museum gained its international prestige as a site of novel and serious scholarship.⁵ Scholars from all over the world knew to whom to turn when they had a question concerning Freud and the history of the psychoanalytic movement. Lydia Marinelli's generous and self-effacing responsiveness and intelligence placed her at the heart of an international intellectual network that now gave her the recognition she deserved. Precisely for those friends and kindred spirits, it was incomprehensible to hear of the difficulties she had to contend with in her home institution. When the house in Berggasse 19 became part of a private foundation in 2004, she was made Director of a future Research

4. 'Verdummend wirkt nämlich jede Veranschaulichung, in der das Moment der Überraschung fehlt. Was zu sehen ist, darf nie dasselbe oder einfach mehr, oder weniger sein, als was die Beschriftung sagt, sondern es muß etwas Neues, einen Trick der Evidenz mit sich führen, den man mit Worten grundsätzlich nicht erzielen kann.' – Walter Benjamin, 1928 (quoted in Marinelli 2000, p. 62). ['For any illustration which lacks the moment of surprise must have the effect of stultification. What is there on display must never be the same – or simpler, or littler – as the description given by the accompanying text, but it has to carry with it something new, a trick of evidence that cannot in principle be achieved with words.']

5. The papers of the 2004 conference were published in Marinelli and Mayer (2006).

Division, but with insufficient support for such a difficult task. In such an environment, intellectual work in itself became an act of resistance.⁶ The discomfort of her new situation did not stop her from struggling for the values of serious scholarship and ethical integrity – values she had always defended and embodied.

It was with a deep sense of shock and loss that all those who knew her as a generous and gifted friend and colleague came to learn that she had taken her life on 8 September 2008, only a week after her return to Vienna from a four-month period of research in Berlin. ‘Death is a scandal’, she had written in a letter to me some years ago after giving the most chilling description of the funeral of a little girl she had attended, a girl unloved by a Viennese family driven by achievement and success because she had been born with a disability.⁷ Lydia Marinelli always maintained a deeply human stance in the work she shared with others; she was never spoiled by her own great achievements. Her intellectual contributions may have seemed small steps in her own eyes, but they are destined to inspire and guide future generations of scholars.

Lydia Marinelli

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1990	MA, History, University of Vienna
1992–98	Research Fellow at the Sigmund Freud Society, Vienna
1999	PhD, History, University of Vienna
1999–2003	Scientific Director of the Sigmund Freud Society, Vienna
2002–04	Lecturer, Department of History, University of Vienna
2004–08	Director of the Research Division of the Sigmund Freud Foundation, Vienna
2008	Visiting Scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin
Died	8 September 2008 in Vienna

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6. The difficulties resulting from the privatization of the Freud Museum have been well described in an article by an Austrian journalist (Dusini 2007).

7. Lydia Marinelli, letter to the author 22 February 1999.

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