



The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985 (Hale, Nathan G. Freud and the Americans, V. 2.)

Nathan G. Hale

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Although Freud made only one visit to the United States, the spectacular rise and equally precipitous decline of his theories on human behavior continue to make headlines. In 1956, celebrating the centennial of Freud's birth, popular magazines reported that this "Darwin of the Mind" had fathered modern psychiatry, psychology, child raising, education, and sexual attitudes. But by 1975, Sir Peter Medawar, a medical research scientist and a Nobel Prize winner, announced in the *New York Review of Books* that "doctrinaire psychoanalytic theory" was the "most stupendous intellectual confidence trick of the twentieth century." In 1984, a headline in *Ms. Magazine*--"The Hundred Year Cover Up: How Freud Betrayed Women"--neatly summed up two decades of scathing feminist criticism. How much of this extraordinary sea change in Freud's American reputation is due to the nature of psychoanalysis itself, and how much to shifts in American society? And what, if anything, of the Freudian legacy will survive the current crisis of psychoanalysis?

The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis, the long awaited conclusion to Nathan G. Hale's pathbreaking history of the American psychoanalytic movement, *Freud and the Americans*, offers a brilliant analysis of Freud's continuing impact on the American cultural landscape. With skill and insight, Hale traces the extraordinary popularization of Freud's ideas through magazines, books, and even novels and Hollywood movies, and reveals how the vast human laboratory of World War I seemed to confirm Freud's theories about the irrational and brutal elements of human nature. Not only did psychoanalysis prove effective for treating the frightful nightmares and other symptoms of shell-shocked soldiers, its promise of helping individuals fulfill their potential fit neatly into the uniquely American pattern of self-improvement and upward mobility. Weighing the recurrent controversies that raged over the scientific validity of Freud's theories with the arguments of influential intellectuals who saw in psychoanalysis a sweeping criticism of traditional sexual mores, Hale shows how and why psychoanalysis came to have such a pervasive influence on the fabric of American life, from child care to criminology. The twenties and thirties saw psychoanalysis transform itself from the calling of a self-chosen group of avant-garde psychiatrists and neurologists to a profession with its own institutions for training and certification. Hale documents how the American insistence on medical training, while greatly annoying to Freud himself, was essential to U.S. acceptance of the psychoanalytic profession. He recreates the enormous vogue enjoyed by psychoanalysis in the years after the Second World War, and the inevitable backlash leading up to the current crisis. As feminists rebelled against Freud's rigid gender roles, new psychotherapies and new drugs narrowed the problems for which psychoanalysis seemed appropriate, and even orthodox analysts began to question the effectiveness of the therapy when analyses lengthened from one or two to five, ten, or more years.

In its final chapters, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis* offers a comprehensive and authoritative assessment of the psychoanalytic movement as it continues to respond to these challenges. Illuminating both the boldness and sweep of Freud's analytic vision and its limitations, it is destined to become a definitive work.



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