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Re-fried Freud

James Hillman and Charles Boer, eds. *Freud's Own Cookbook*. New York, Harper and Row, 1985

Reviewed by Greg Mogenson

After two-thousand years are we ready for the *First Supper*--the first *pleasurable* meal? Ready or not James Hillman and Charles Boer have rescued from the pantry shelf of IX *Bergasse* 19 Freud's long-suppressed recipe book of psychoanalytical cuisine. The recipes--Banana O, Stekel Tartar, Split Fliess Soup, Totem and Tapioca, Wish-fulfilment Icing etc.--are certain to release a host or repressed appetites in the reader. Like the case studies of his earlier writings, the recipes of this book show us the clinico-culinary basis of his psychoanalytic reasonings. But more than that, *Freud's Own Cookbook* suggests a recasting of its author's theory of the sexual libido into a theory of culinary energy. Significantly, with this move Freud corrects a tendency of his earlier work to sublimate oral misadventures into more secondary, sexual ones. "Could I have been wrong," writes Freud in his Introduction, "in regard to the [libido's) origin in sexuality (could I have been wrong about sexuality itself?)? Yes, the principle of life is Eros--but might not the primary organization of the erotic be oral and remain oral through to the final meal?" Freud's move from the bedroom to the kitchen, the genitals to the mouth and palate, is negotiated with consummate culinary skill. The re-thinking of the theory of the body's erogenous zones, for example, is accompanied by a wealth of clinical insights and even a recipe for "erogenous scones"!

Besides being a landmark in clinical cuisine, *Freud's Own Cookbook* is a work of cultural criticism. *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929) and other old dishes of half-baked thought are here re-fried and garnished with garden-fresh insights. The sections of the book--"Civilization and Its Indigestion" and "Wonderbread, Or the Future of an Illusion"--although the psycho-culinary reflections of Freud's old age, have the manifesto quality we usually associate with youth. Like the philosopher at the breast of Sophia, the greybeard Freud here suckles at the breast of his wisdom's deepest source: the nutritive instincts. Out of the Oedipus-complex at last, Freud helps us to eat our way through to the truth about what mother really means: a meal, a cook, a source of food.

The editors, Hillman and Boer--themselves principals of the pleasure school of Imaginal Psychology--have apparently taken on the cook book project sensing the potential of the book to free psychoanalysis from the blandness of its routine diet. Not only are they to be commended for their careful editorship, but also for bringing before the public a work that is both a masterpiece of deliteralizing and a treat to eat.