James Strachey:
Freud's Official Translator
(1887-1967)

James Strachey, a British psychoanalyst, translated over 24 volumes of Sigmund Freud's works from **German** to **English**, which became the definitive "Standard Edition" that remains a cornerstone in psychoanalysis.

Sigmund Freud:
Austrian neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis

Early Life and Academic Pursuits

• **Educational Background:** Graduated from St. Paul's School in London with honors in 1904 and continued studies in classics at Trinity College, Cambridge. He did not receive any education in the translation field.

• **Shift in Focus:** Initially pursuing classics, Strachey ultimately obtained an undeclared degree in moral sciences (1909), reflecting his evolving interests.

• **Discovery of Psychoanalysis:** Found his calling in psychoanalysis after encountering Freud's paper "A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis" while at Cambridge, sparking his deep interest in the field.
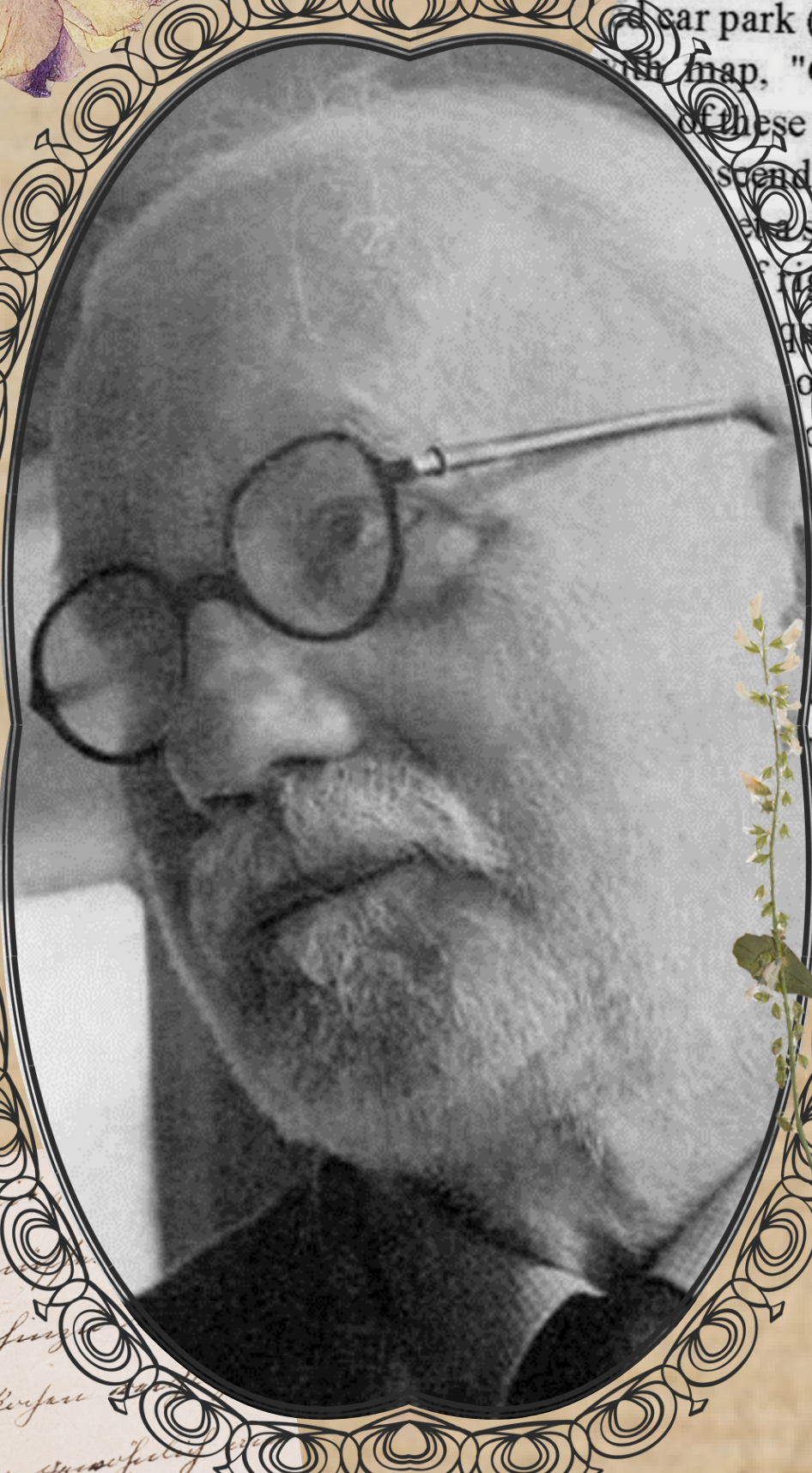
The Path to Translation:

• **Connection with Freud:** Corresponded with Ernest Jones (Freud's biographer, friend and colleague) and Freud in 1919, asking to be his student, leading to an invitation to Vienna in 1920 where he began his analysis with Freud alongside his wife, Alix.

• **Pivotal Moment:** Recognizing Strachey's literary prowess, Ernest Jones facilitated his collaboration with Freud, initiating the monumental task of translating Freud's writings into English. Freud himself officially chose James and Alix as his translators.

• **Collaborative Efforts:** With Alix Strachey and colleagues such as Alan Tyson, Strachey began the challenging but pioneering translation work, lasting more than twenty years.

In 1922, James entered the British Psycho-Analytical Society as an associate member. A year later, he became a full member, and in 1928, he became a training analyst.

Under the title *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Strachey's 24-volume translation was published. It became the reference edition of Freud's works in English and a source for translations into other languages. The extensive footnotes and introductions he added to each text, framing them within Freud's extensive bibliography, added incomparable value to Strachey's work. Strachey then was appointed general editor of the Standard Edition translation of all of Freud's psychological works into English in 1948.

His translations not only conveyed the literal meaning but also preserved the nuanced psychological ideas and terminology crucial for understanding Freudian psychoanalysis. They also introduced key psychoanalytic terms into the English language, solidifying their usage and understanding within the field of psychoanalysis and broader academic discourse. Moreover, he struck a balance between maintaining scholarly rigor and making Freud's ideas accessible to a wider audience, influencing subsequent translators in achieving similar clarity and depth in their work.

A Few Translation Choices:

1 Strachey replaced Freud's favored direct German terms with new and unfamiliar words, resulting in the transformation of concepts like "I" and "It" to "Ego" and "Id," respectively. Although he brough these words into the vocabulary successfully, this instance is considered a mistake in his translations.

2 Among others, we owe Strachey the terms "cathexis" for "Besetzung" in German and "anaclitic" for "Anlehnung." The origin of both terms was ancient Greek.

3 He also translated "Trieb" as "instinct" (later was translated as "drive")

He was awarded the Tieck Prize in 1967 for the translation of the Standard Edition, which stands as the enduring 24-volume standard edition of Freud's works.

Selected Translations:

• *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913)
• *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921)
• *The Ego and the Id* (1927)
• *The Future of an Illusion* (1928)
• *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)
• *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940)
• *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 volumes, 1953-1974)

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