

Putnam Camp: Sigmund Freud, James Jackson Putnam, and the Purpose of American Psychology

George Prochnik

Other Press (October 2006)

Hardcover \$29.95 (480pp)

978-1-59051-182-4

Mind Menders. Why does it matter that Freud went to Putnam's camp in 1909 during his only visit to the U.S.? "History offers any number of poignant, unlikely conjunctions of person and place" but perhaps none more odd and significant than that of the Viennese-Jewish atheist founder of psychoanalysis and his host in the Adirondacks, an eminent blue-blood Bostonian neurologist. They corresponded earnestly until Putnam's death in 1918.

In *Putnam Camp: Sigmund Freud, James Jackson Putnam and the Purpose of American Psychology* (Other Press, 471 pages, 30 illustrations, hardcover, \$29.95, 978-1-59051-182-4), writer and poet George Prochnik illuminates a mission of two souls in search of one psyche. The author succeeds beautifully, having discovered a cache of family letters hidden by his mother, Putnam's granddaughter. Prochnik sheds light on an important relationship between Putnam and the influential educator Susan Blow, founder of America's first kindergarten. With Chapters like "The Great Sex Symphony" and "Making Hegel Talk English" he presents vivid characters, history, and ideas.

Ironically, Putnam's optimistic emphasis on human spirit and will, to which sexologist Freud sternly objected, made psychoanalysis palatable enough to take hold in the new world. Prochnik finds a credible legacy of their union in the work of such renowned American psychiatrists as Karl Menninger and recent Nobelist Eric Kandel.

(August 18, 2009)

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