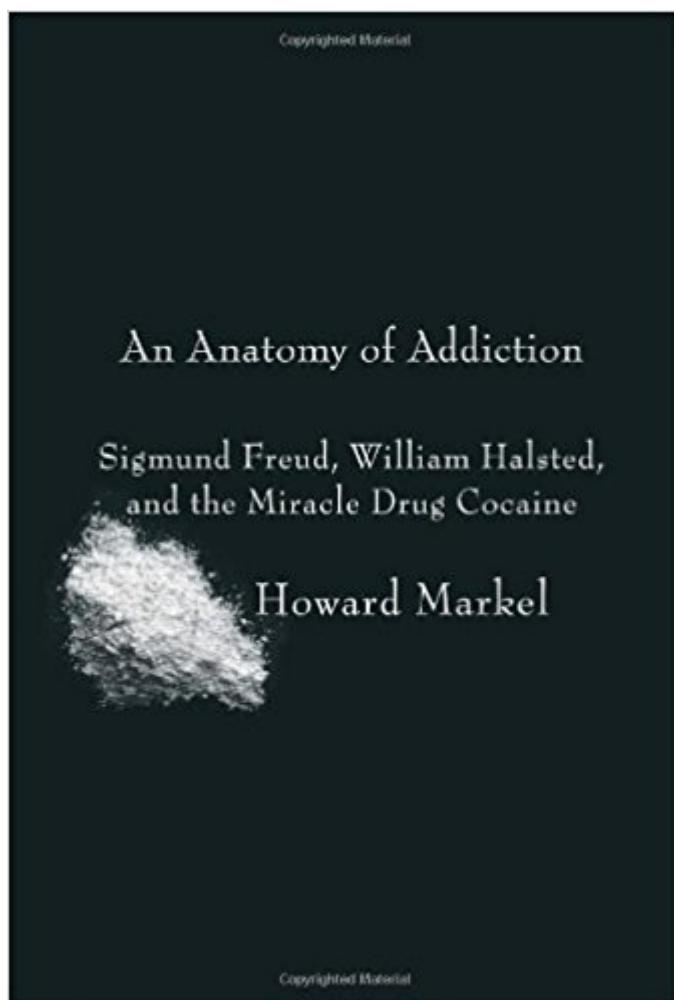


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# An Anatomy Of Addiction: Sigmund Freud, William Halsted, And The Miracle Drug Cocaine



## Synopsis

From acclaimed medical historian Howard Markel, author of *When Germs Travel*, the astonishing account of the years-long cocaine use of Sigmund Freud, young, ambitious neurologist, and William Halsted, the equally young, pathfinding surgeon. Markel writes of the physical and emotional damage caused by the then-heralded wonder drug, and how each man ultimately changed the world in spite of it—or because of it. One became the father of psychoanalysis; the other, of modern surgery. Both men were practicing medicine at the same time in the 1880s: Freud at the Vienna General Hospital, Halsted at New York's Bellevue Hospital. Markel writes that Freud began to experiment with cocaine as a way of studying its therapeutic uses—as an antidote for the overprescribed morphine, which had made addicts of so many, and as a treatment for depression. Halsted, an acclaimed surgeon even then, was curious about cocaine's effectiveness as an anesthetic and injected the drug into his arm to prove his theory. Neither Freud nor Halsted, nor their colleagues, had any idea of the drug's potential to dominate and endanger their lives. Addiction as a bona fide medical diagnosis didn't even exist in the elite medical circles they inhabited. In *An Anatomy of Addiction*, Markel writes about the life and work of each man, showing how each came to know about cocaine; how Freud found that the drug cured his indigestion, dulled his aches, and relieved his depression. The author writes that Freud, after a few months of taking the magical drug, published a treatise on it, *Über Coca*, in which he described his “most gorgeous excitement.” The paper marked a major shift in Freud's work: he turned from studying the anatomy of the brain to exploring the human psyche. Halsted, one of the most revered of American surgeons, became the head of surgery at the newly built Johns Hopkins Hospital and then professor of surgery, the hospital's most exalted position, committing himself repeatedly to Butler Hospital, an insane asylum, to withdraw from his out-of control cocaine use. Halsted invented modern surgery as we know it today: devising new ways to safely invade the body in search of cures and pioneering modern surgical techniques that controlled bleeding and promoted healing. He insisted on thorough hand washing, on scrub-downs and whites for doctors and nurses, on sterility in the operating room—even inventing the surgical glove, which he designed and had the Goodyear Rubber Company make for him—accomplishing all of this as he struggled to conquer his unyielding desire for cocaine. *An Anatomy of Addiction* tells the tragic and heroic story of each man, accidentally struck down in his prime by an insidious malady: tragic because of the time, relationships, and health cocaine forced each to squander; heroic in the intense battle each man waged to overcome his affliction as he conquered his own world with his

visionary healing gifts. Here is the full story, long overlooked, told in its rich historical context.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An incredible book...an absolutely fascinating read".--Ira Flatow, National Public Radio's Science Friday"Markel brilliantly describes the paradox of [Halsted's and Freud's] lives".--George Rousseau, NATURE"A witty, wide-ranging book".--Boston Globe"Inspired, entertaining, and informative...[Howard Markel] tells this fascinating tale in an insightful contemporary book that is both intellectually engaging and exceptionally well written."--Journal of the American Medical Association--"Markel creates rich portraits of men who shared, as he writes of Freud, a particular constellation of bold risk taking, emotional scar tissue, and psychic turmoil."--The New Yorker "Terrific . . . This rich, engrossing book reminds us of the strangeness of even heroic destinies."--Richard Rayner, Los Angeles Times "[A] rich, revelatory new book . . . [Markel is] a careful writer and a tireless researcher, and as a trained physician himself, Markel is able to pronounce on medical matters with firmness and authority."--Lev Grossman, TIME "[An] incisive and often damning story of the 'miracle drug cocaine.' . . . Elegantly subversive . . . The author's insights and analytical skills make *An Anatomy of Addiction* an irresistible cautionary tale"--Deborah Blum, The Wall Street Journal "A splendid history. . . [Markel is a] fluent, incisive and often subtly funny writer."--Michael

Sragow, The Baltimore Sun "A absorbing and thoroughly documented. . . a vivid narrative of two of the most remarkable of the many contributors to our understanding of human biology and function . . . A tour de force of scientific and social history, one that helps illuminate a unique period in the long story of medical discovery." •Sherwin Nuland, on the cover of The New York Times Book Review "Provocative . . . persuasive and engrossing." •Laura Miller, Salon.com "Compelling and compassionate. . . a book that profoundly demonstrates the complexity and breadth of their genius. . . a richly woven analysis complete with anecdotes, historical research, photos and present-day knowledge about the character of the addictive personality." •Booklist "Howard Markel eloquently tells the parallel stories of these two pathbreaking physicians and how their stories intersect in remarkable and sometimes tragic ways . . . Markel's extraordinary achievement combines first-rate history of medicine and outstanding cultural history." •Publishers Weekly (starred) "From the dramatic opening scene on the first page to the epilogue, *An Anatomy of Addiction* is a hugely satisfying read. Howard Markel is physician, historian and wonderful storyteller, and since his tale involves two of the most compelling characters in medicine, I could not put it down." •addictive is the word for this terrific book. •Abraham Verghese, author of *Cutting for Stone*

Howard Markel, M.D., Ph.D., is the George E. Wantz Distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine and director of the Center for the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan. His books include *Quarantine!* and *When Germs Travel*. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*, and he is a frequent contributor to National Public Radio. Markel is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In finishing this book, which was hard to put down, sent me searching for other books by this author. It is one of the best presentations that I have read, complete with excellent notes, and close to 100 pertinent illustrations, The scholarship of this Medical Historian is extraordinary. While the focus is on two contemporary physicians, both trapped by the addictive powers of cocaine, Markel details enlightens us as to the ways of the era of modern medicine. Freud and Halsted (the premier surgeon-in-chief of the John Hopkins Hospital) belief that the super drug potentially capable of curing anything. It would bring them fame and fortune as a pharmaceutical. Sadly their personal trials brought them a debilitating curse. The study details the pathological dispersion of addiction in

a manner that is very easily understood by a layman. Through-out the book is written to be understood, and the story line will captivate you. To readers, as myself, the author Markel may be addictive!

"An Anatomy of Addiction" by Howard Markel examines two famous doctors, Sigmund Freud and William Halsted and their addiction to cocaine. Freud, who invented psychoanalysis, the search for self-truth, became convinced that cocaine was a miracle drug with no side effects. Halsted, considered to be the father of modern surgery was probably the first cocaine addict to come to the attention of medical professionals in the United States. Peruvian Indians on the eastern slopes of the Andes have been chewing coca leaves for centuries. Their Inca ancestors used it in many religious rituals and initiation rites. Chewing coca leaves was found to have the remarkable ability to suppress hunger, increase tolerance, and stretch the bounds of human endurance, but is no more harmful than several cups of coffee. It wasn't until around 1860 that the devil was unleashed by a German scientist who converted the leaves into the highly purified coca alkaloid. If there is such a thing as an addictive personality, Freud certainly had it. He became so enamored with cocaine and fascinated with its effects on the mind that he considered it a treatment for morphine addiction and depression among many other ailments. Halsted was interested in the drug's anesthetic qualities and how it could aid him in surgery, so began experimenting on himself by injecting the drug into his arm. Both men consumed great quantities of the drug and eventually encountered serious problems because they had done so. At the time, the late 1800's, addiction as a bona fide medical diagnosis was not in the medical vocabulary. Freud struggled with this demon for twelve years and Halsted, it is speculated, struggled with cocaine as well as morphine addiction until his death in 1922. "An Anatomy of Addiction" is a fascinating read. It is a study in the diabolical power of addiction and the role cocaine played in the budding careers of two world-changing geniuses. Engrossing and interesting from the first page to the last. David Allan Reeves Author of "Running Away From Me"

This is an excellent, well-written book that tells the story of the cocaine addictions of Sigmund Freud and William Halsted. The author is both a medical doctor and professor of the History of Medicine, and his expertise in both fields clearly shows through in this delightful and informative book. The book provides mini-biographies of both men as well as a history of cocaine. The book is indeed an anatomy of the addiction of these two men, both to cocaine and to morphine, which they took to mitigate the effects of the cocaine. The book details the impact these drugs had on their lives, and also discusses the subject of addiction in general, which I thought gave important insights into this

subject. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in a good biography, the history of medicine, or in a well-written non-fiction book. What is in the book (spoiler alert) - While Freud appears to have eventually overcome his addiction, whereas Halsted appears to never have been completely able to do so and required daily morphine injections to eliminate his cravings for cocaine. There is evidence that he periodically went on cocaine binges, requiring a lifetime of morphine addiction. Contrary to what is sometimes reported, cocaine did not improve either man's abilities - much to the contrary, the brief sense of euphoria and improved concentration that they believed the drug gave them was more than outweighed by the crash and depression that followed high the drug gave them. Furthermore, the sense of improved concentration and insight that they initially believed the drug gave them proved also to be illusory. Freud eventually gave up the drug after it almost led to the death of a patient, which could have ended, or at least stifled, his medical career. Halsted had to check himself into a mental hospital to rid himself of his cocaine addiction, but he relapsed and had to do this several times, eventually settling on periodic cocaine binges and a lifetime of morphine addition.

Halsted's addiction shortchanged his patients, the students he was training and the medical profession in general and is an object lesson in the danger of addiction of any kind. It is unclear how much of Freud's ideas were cocaine fueled, as much of his work was done after he stopped taking the drug, but it is clear that it was of no real benefit to his thinking. The only positive feature of cocaine was its use as a topical anesthetic, which revolutionized dentistry and eye surgery. Freud mentioned the use of cocaine as a local anesthetic in his treatise on cocaine, *Uber Coca*, but it was a colleague, Carl Koller who pioneered its use as an anesthetic for eye surgery, thereby gaining the acclaim that Freud regretted missing out on because he was focusing on the psychoactive aspects of the drug. Freud considered cocaine to be a wonder drug, only to become personally acquainted with the ultimately destructive and dangerous aspects of its use. Cocaine as an anesthetic has largely been replaced by synthetic drugs such as Novocain and Lidocaine, which preserve the anesthetic qualities of cocaine, without its addictive and psychoactive affects.

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