

Representation of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora

Toril Moi

Over the past few years Freud's account of his treatment of the eighteen-year-old Dora has provoked many feminists to take up their pen, in anger or fascination. Dora had for some time suffered from various hysterical symptoms (nervous cough, loss of voice, migraine, depression, and what Freud calls 'hysterical unsociability' and '*taedium vitae*'), but it was not until the autumn of 1900, when her parents found a suicide note from her, that Dora's father sent her to Freud for treatment. Freud's case history reveals much about the situation of a young woman from the Viennese bourgeoisie at the turn of the century. Dora's psychological problems can easily be linked to her social background. She has very little, if any, scope for independent activity, is strictly guarded by her family, and feels under considerable pressure from her father. She believes (and Freud agrees that she is right) that she is being used as a pawn in a game between her father and Herr K., the husband of her father's mistress. The father wants to exchange Dora for Frau K. ('if I get your wife, you get my daughter'), so as to be able to carry on his affair with Frau K. undisturbed. Dora claims that her father only sent her to psychiatric treatment because he hoped that she would be 'cured' into giving up her opposition to her father's affair with Frau K., accept her role as a victim of the male power game and take Herr K. as her lover.

Freud, then, becomes the person who is to help Dora to handle this difficult situation. But Freud himself is the first to admit that his treatment of Dora was a failure. Freud has his own explanations of this failure, but these are not wholly convincing. Feminists have been quick to point out that the reasons for Freud's failure are clearly sexist: Freud is authoritarian, a willing participant in the male power game conducted between Dora's father and Herr K., and at no time turns to consider Dora's own experience of the events. That Freud's analysis fails because of its inherent sexism is the common feminist conclusion.

But *Dora*¹ is a complex text, and feminists have stressed quite different points in their reading of it. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément discuss the political potential of hysteria in their book *La jeune née* (Cixous and Clément, 1975), and agree that Dora's hysteria developed as a form of protest, a silent revolt against male power. They differ, however, as I shall show later, in their evaluation of the importance of hysteria as a political weapon. Cixous and Clément do not discuss in any detail the interaction between Freud and Dora, but Hélène Cixous returned to this theme in 1976, when she published her play *Portrait de Dora* (Cixous, 1976). Here Dora's story is represented in dreamlike sequences from Dora's own viewpoint. Cixous plays skilfully with Freud's

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text: she quotes, distorts and displaces the 'father-text' with great formal mastery. This technique enables her to create new interpretations of *Dora's* symptoms in a playful exposure of Freud's limitations.

Jacqueline Rose's article 'Dora – fragment of an analysis' (Rose, 1978) differs considerably from these two French texts. Rose sees *Dora* as a text which focuses with particular acuteness on the problem of the representation of femininity, and discusses several modern French psychoanalytical theories of femininity (particularly Michèle Montrelay and Luce Irigaray in relation to Lacan). She concludes by rejecting that simplistic reading of *Dora* which would see *Dora* the woman opposed to and oppressed by Freud the man. According to Rose, *Dora* reveals how Freud's concept of the feminine was incomplete and contradictory, thus delineating a major problem in psychoanalytical theory: its inability to account for the feminine. A valuable contribution to a feminist reading of psychoanalysis, Rose's essay is nevertheless silent on its political consequences.

The same is true of Suzanne Gaehart's 'The Scene of Psychoanalysis: The Unanswered Questions of *Dora*' (Gaehart, 1979). Gaehart reads *Dora* principally through Lacan's and Irigaray's discussion of *Dora's* case, arguing that the central problem in the text is 'the symbolic status of the father'. According to Gaehart, *Dora* must be seen as Freud's 'interrogation of the principle of paternity'; it is in the correct understanding of the text's handling of this problem that we will find the key to the ultimate explanation of *Dora's* illness and also the basis of the identity of Freud and his work (Gaehart, 1979: 114). Gaehart's highly sophisticated reading of *Dora* shows that the status of the father in *Dora* is problematical, and the father himself made marginal, because Freud wants to avoid the central insight that the (Lacanian) Imaginary and Symbolic realms are fundamentally complicit. Theoretically valuable though this essay is, it fails to indicate the consequences of its reading of *Dora* for a feminist approach to psychoanalysis.

Maria Ramas' long study of *Dora* 'Freud's *Dora*, *Dora's* Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion' (Ramas, 1980), is the most accessible article on *Dora* to date. Whereas Rose and Gaehart use a sophisticated theoretical vocabulary, Ramas writes in a lucid, low-key style. But her 'theoretical' enquiry advances little beyond a scrupulous, somewhat tedious résumé of Freud's text. Ramas argues that 'Ida's' problem (Ramas uses *Dora's* real name, *Ida Bauer*, throughout her text) was her unconscious belief that 'femininity, bondage and debasement were synonymous' (Ramas, 1980: 502). Since Freud unconsciously shared this belief, she claims, he could only reinforce *Dora's* problem rather than free her from them.

This, at least, is a traditional feminist reading: it implies that *Dora* could escape her hysteria only through feminist consciousness-raising – that if she could stop equating femininity with bondage she would be liberated. But it is also a sadly partial and superficial account, failing to encompass many controversial areas of Freud's text. Despite one brief reference to Jacqueline Rose's article, Ramas seems to find the status of the term 'femininity' in the text quite unproblematical; she unquestioningly accepts Freud's automatic reduction of oral sex to fellatio (a point I shall return to later), and does not even notice many of Freud's more eccentric concerns in the case-study. Qualifying her own essay as pure 'feminist polemics', Ramas suggests that further study of *Dora* would lead beyond feminism:

If this were Freud's story, we would have to go beyond feminist polemics and search for the sources of the negative countertransference – the unanalyzed part of Freud – that brought the analysis to an abrupt end (Ramas, 1980: 504).

I believe that it is precisely through an exploration of the 'unanalyzed part of Freud' that we may uncover the relations between sexual politics and

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psychoanalytical theory in *Dora*, and therefore also in Freud's works in general. In my reading of *Dora* I want to show that neither Rose and Gaerhart's depoliticized theorizing, nor Ramas's rather simplistic 'feminist polemics', will really do. Feminists must neither reject theoretical discussion as 'beyond feminist polemics', nor forget the ideological context of theory.



Dora

Fragment or Whole?

The first version of *Dora* was written in 1901. Freud entitled it 'Dreams and hysteria', and had the greatest ambitions for the text: this was his first great case-history, and it was to continue and develop the work presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in the previous year. But Freud recalled *Dora* from his publisher, and curiously enough delayed publication until 1905, the year of the *Three Essays on Sexuality*. Why would Freud hesitate for more than four years before deciding to publish *Dora*? According to Jacqueline Rose, this hesitation may have been because *Dora* was written in the period between the theory of the unconscious, developed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and the theory of sexuality, first expressed in the *Three Essays*. *Dora* would then mark the transition between these two theories, and Freud's hesitation in publishing the text suggests the theoretical hesitation within it. Jacqueline Rose may well be right in this supposition: it is at any rate evident that among Freud's texts *Dora* marks an unusual degree of uncertainty, doubt and ambiguity.

This uncertainty is already revealed in the title of the work: the true title is not *Dora*, but *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. Freud lists three reasons for calling his text a fragment: first, the *analytic results* are fragmentary because *Dora* interrupted the treatment before it was completed and because Freud did not write up the case history until after the treatment was over. The only exceptions to this are *Dora*'s two dreams, which Freud took down immediately. The text we are reading, in other words, is constructed from fragmentary notes and Freud's fragmentary memory. Secondly, Freud insists on the fact that he has only given an account of the (incomplete) analytic results, and not at all of the *process* of interpretation – that is to say that Freud wilfully withholds the *technique of the analytic work*. To describe the analytic technique, Freud argues, would have led to 'nothing but hopeless confusion' (Freud, 1977: 41). Finally, Freud stresses that no *one* case history can provide the answer to *all* the problems presented by hysteria: all case-histories are in this sense incomplete answers to the problem they set out to solve.

It is of course perfectly normal to state, as Freud does here, the limitations of one's project in the preface to the finished work, but Freud does more than that. In his 'Prefatory Remarks' to *Dora*, Freud seems positively obsessed with the incomplete status of his text. He returns to the subject again and again, either to excuse the fact that he is presenting a fragment or to express his longings for a *complete* text after all. His 'Prefatory Remarks' oscillate constantly between the theme of fragmentation and the notion of totality.

These two themes, however, are not presented as straight opposites. Having expressed his regrets that the case history was incomplete, he writes:

But its short-comings are connected with the very circumstances which have made its publication possible . . . I should not have known how to deal with the material involved in the history of a treatment which had lasted, perhaps, for a whole year (Freud, 1977: 40).

Freud here totally undermines any notion of a fundamental opposition between fragment and whole: it would have been impossible to write down a *complete* case history. The fragment can be presented as a complete book, the complete case history could not.

Nevertheless, Freud insists on the fact that the fragment *lacks* something:

In face of the incompleteness of my analytic results, I had no choice but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of

day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity. I have restored what is missing, taking the best models known to me from other analyses; but like a conscientious archaeologist, I have not omitted to mention in each case where the authentic parts end and my construction begins (Freud, 1977: 41).

Once again Freud candidly admits that his results are incomplete – only to claim in the same breath that he has ‘restored what is missing’: Freud’s metaphors in this context are significant. Dora’s story is compared to the ‘priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity’, and Freud himself figures as an archaeologist, digging the relics out from the earth. His claim here is that when he adds something to the ‘mutilated relics’, completeness is established *malgré tout*. But this new completeness is after all not quite complete. On the same page as the above quotation, Freud writes that the psychoanalytic technique (which he jealously retains for himself) does not by its nature lend itself to the creation of complete sequences: ‘everything that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time’ (Freud, 1977: 41). The ‘completeness’ achieved by Freud’s supplementary conjectures is doubly incomplete: it consists of Dora’s story (the ‘mutilated relics of antiquity’), to which Freud’s own assumptions have been added. But Dora’s story is not only a fragment: it is a fragment composed of information that has emerged ‘piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time’. We must assume that it is Freud himself who has imposed a fictional coherence on Dora’s story, in order to render the narrative readable. But Dora’s story is in turn only one part of the finished work entitled ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria’. The other part is supplemented by Freud. In itself Dora’s story is too fragmentary, it is readable only when Freud supplies the necessary supplement. But that supplement is based on Freud’s experience from other cases of hysteria, cases which must have been constructed in the same way as Dora’s: by information provided ‘piecemeal, over widely separated periods of time’. The fragment depends on the supplement, which depends on other fragments depending on other supplements and so on *ad infinitum*.

We are, in other words, surprisingly close to Jacques Derrida’s theories of the production of meaning as ‘*différance*’ (Derrida, 1972). According to Derrida, meaning can never be seized as presence: it is always deferred, constantly displaced on to the next element in the series, in a chain of signification which has no end, no transcendental signified which might provide the final anchorpoint for the production of sense. This, need one say, is not Freud’s own *conscious* theory: he clings to his dream of ‘complete elucidation’ (Freud, 1977: 54), refusing to acknowledge that according to his own account of the status of the *Dora* text, completeness is an unattainable illusion. Even when he insists strongly on the fragmentary status of his text, he always implies that completeness is within reach. He can, for instance, write that ‘if the work had been continued, we should no doubt have obtained the fullest possible enlightenment upon every particular of the case (Freud, 1977: 40). Freud’s texts oscillates endlessly between his desire for complete insight or knowledge, and an unconscious realization (or fear) of the fragmentary, deferring status of knowledge itself.

Transference and Countertransference

We have seen that in his ‘Prefatory Remarks’ Freud discloses that ‘Dora’s story’ is largely ‘Freud’s story’: he is the author, the one who has conjured a complete work from these analytic fragments. This in itself should alert the reader eager to discover

Dora's own view of her case to the dangers of taking Freud's words too much for granted. His account of the analysis of Dora must instead be scanned with the utmost suspicion.

The better part of the 'Postscript' is devoted to a discussion of the reasons why the analysis of Dora was at least in part a failure. Freud's main explanation is that he failed to discover the importance of the *transference* for the analysis; he did not discover in time that Dora was transferring the emotions she felt for Herr K. on to Freud himself. Psychoanalytic theory holds that transference is normal in the course of analysis, that it consists in the patient's transferring emotions for some other person on to the analyst, and that if the analyst, unaware of the transference, cannot counteract it, the analysis will in consequence go awry.

Freud adds this information in this 'Postscript'. But if we are to grasp what is being acted out between Freud and Dora, it is important to keep in mind from the outset this transference on Dora's part from Herr K. to Freud. Transference, however, is something the patient does to the analyst. Freud does not mention at all the opposite phenomenon, *countertransference*, which consists in the analyst's transferring of his/her own unconscious emotions on to the patient. Jacques Lacan has discussed precisely this problem in *Dora* in an article entitled 'Intervention sur le transfert' (Lacan, 1966: 224). According to Lacan, Freud unconsciously identifies with Herr K. in his relationship to Dora, which makes him (Freud) far too interested in Dora's alleged love for Herr K. and effectively blind to any other explanation of her problems. Thus the countertransference contributes decisively to the failure of Dora's analysis.

The fact of transference and countertransference between Freud and Dora considerably complicates the task of the *Dora* reader. Freud's attempts to posit himself as the neutral, scientific observer who is merely noting down his observations and reflexions can no longer be accepted. The archaeologist must be suspected of having mutilated the relics he finds. We must remember that Freud's version of the case is not only coloured by his own unconscious countertransference, but also by the fact that he signally fails to notice the transference in Dora, and therefore systematically misinterprets her transference symptoms throughout the text. This, oddly, is something the reader is not told until he/she gets to the 'Postscript'.

Freud's interpretation of Dora's case can be summarized as follows. Dora develops hysterical symptoms because she represses sexual desire. But her case has an added, oedipal dimension: one must suppose that Dora originally desired her father, but since her father disappointed her by starting an affair with Frau K., Dora now pretends to hate him. Herr K. represents the father for Dora, particularly because he is also Frau K.'s husband. Dora's repression of her sexual desire for Herr K. is therefore at once a hysterical reaction (repression of sexual desire) *and* an oedipal reaction (rejection of the father through rejection of Herr K.). Based on this interpretation, Freud's treatment of Dora consists in repeated attempts to get her to admit her repressed desire for Herr K., a 'confession' Dora resists as best she can.

We have already seen that, according to Lacan, the analysis failed because of Freud's unconscious identification with Herr K. Since Dora is at the same time identifying Freud with Herr K., the result is inevitably that she must experience Freud's insistence on the necessity of acknowledging her desire for Herr K. as a repetition of Herr K.'s attempt to elicit sexual favours from her. In the end she rejects Freud in the same way she rejected Herr K. – by giving him two weeks' notice. Herr K. had earlier had an affair with the governess of his children, and Dora felt greatly insulted at being courted like a servant by the same man. Her revenge is to treat both Freud and Herr K. as servants in return.

But Freud's incessant identification with Herr K., the rejected lover, leads to other interesting aspects of the text. One of the most important episodes in the study is

Freud's interpretation of Herr K.'s attempt to kiss Dora, then fourteen, after having tricked her into being alone with him in his office. Freud writes that Herr K.:

suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips. This was surely just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never before been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door (Freud, 1977: 59).

At this moment in the text Freud is completely in the grip of his countertransference: he must at all costs emphasize that Dora's reaction was abnormal, and writes that 'the behaviour of this child of fourteen was already entirely and completely hysterical' (Freud, 1977: 59). Her reaction was hysterical because she was already repressing sexual desire: 'Instead of the genital sensation which would certainly have been felt of a healthy girl in such circumstances, Dora was overcome by . . . disgust' (Freud, 1977: 60). It is, of course, resplendently clear to any scientific observer that any normal girl of fourteen would be overwhelmed by desire when a middle aged man 'suddenly clasps her to him' in a lonely spot.

Freud then links Dora's feeling of disgust to *oral* impulses, and goes on to interpret as a 'displacement' Dora's statement that she clearly felt the pressure from the upper part of Herr K.'s body against her own. What she really felt, according to Freud, and what aroused such strong oral disgust, was the pressure of Herr K.'s erect penis. This unmentionable organ was then repressed, and the feeling of pressure displaced from the lower to the upper part of the body. The oral disgust is then related to Dora's habit of thumbsucking as a child, and Freud connects the oral satisfaction resulting from this habit to Dora's nervous cough. He interprets the cough (irritation of oral cavity and throat) as a revealing symptom of Dora's sexual fantasies: she must be fantasizing a scene where sexual satisfaction is obtained by using the mouth (*per os*, as Freud puts it (1977:81)), and this scene is one which takes place between Frau K. and Dora's father.

Having said as much, Freud spends the next few pages defending himself against accusations of using too foul a language with his patients. These passages could be read as betraying a certain degree of unconscious tension in Freud himself, but it is enough to point out here that he argues his way from exhortations to tolerance to the high social status of 'the perversion which is the most repellent to us, the sensual love of a man for a man' (Freud, 1977: 83) in ancient Greece, before returning to Dora's oral phantasy and making it plain that what he had in mind was fellatio or 'sucking at the male organ' (Freud, 1977: 85). It would not be difficult to detect in Freud a defensive reaction-formation in this context, since on the next page he feels compelled to allude to 'this excessively repulsive and perverted phantasy of sucking at a penis' (Freud, 1977: 86). It is little wonder that he feels the need to defend himself against the idea of fellatio, since it is more than probable that the fantasy exists, not in Dora's mind, but in his alone. Freud has informed us that Dora's father was impotent, and assumes this to be the basis of Dora's 'repulsive and perverted phantasy'. According to Freud, the father cannot manage penetration, so Frau K. must perform fellatio instead. But as Lacan has pointed out, this argument reveals an astonishing lack of logic on Freud's part. In the case of male impotence, the man is obviously much more likely, *faute de mieux*, to perform cunnilingus. As Lacan writes: ' . . . chacun sait que le *cunnilingus* est l'artifice le plus communément adopté par les "messieurs fortunés" que leurs forces commencent d'abandonner' (Lacan, 1966: 221). It is in this logical flaw Freud's countertransference is seen at its strongest. The illogicality reveals his own unconscious wish for gratification, a gratification Freud's unconscious alter ego, Herr K., might obtain if only Dora would admit her desire for him.

Freud's countertransference blinds him to the possibility that Dora's hysteria may be due to the repression of desire, not for Herr K., but for his wife, Frau K. A fatal lack of insight into the transference process prevents Freud from discovering Dora's homosexuality early enough. Dora's condition as a victim of male dominance here becomes starkly visible. She is not only a pawn in the game between Herr K. and her father; her doctor joins the male team and untiringly tries to ascribe to her desires she does not have and to ignore the ones she does have.

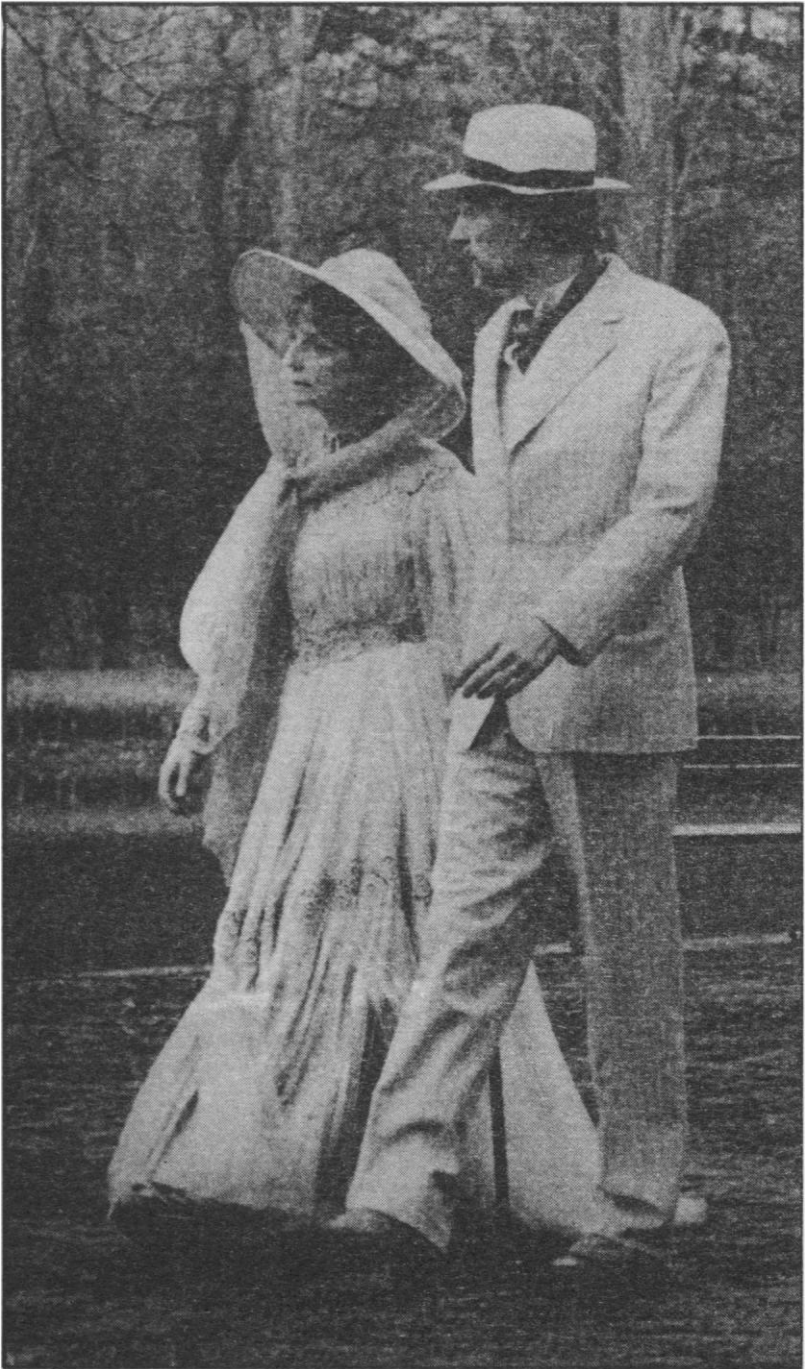
Patriarchal Prejudices

Freud's oppressive influence on Dora does not, however, stem only from the countertransference. There are also more general ideological tendencies to sexism at work in his text. Freud for instance systematically refuses to consider female sexuality as an active, independent drive. Again and again he exhorts Dora to accept herself as an object for Herr K. Every time Dora reveals active sexual desires Freud interprets them away, either by assuming that Dora is expressing masculine identification (when she fantasizes about female genitals, Freud instantly assumes that she wants to penetrate them), or by supposing that she desires to be penetrated by the male (Dora's desire for Frau K. is interpreted as her desire to be in Frau K.'s place in order to gain access to Herr K.). His position is self-contradictory: he is one of the first to acknowledge the existence of sexual desire in women, and at the same time renders himself incapable of seeing it as more than the impulse to become passive recipients for male desire. Lacan assumes precisely the same attitude when he states that the problem for Dora (and all women) is that they must accept themselves as objects of male desire 's'accepter comme objet du désir de l'homme' (Lacan 1966: 222) and that this is the reason for Dora's adoration of Frau K.

Feminists can't help feeling relieved when Dora finally dismisses Freud like another servant. It is tempting to read Dora's hysterical symptoms, as do Cixous and Clément, as a silent revolt against male power over women's bodies and women's language. But at the same time it is disconcerting to see how inefficient Dora's revolt turned out to be. Felix Deutsch describes Dora's tragic destiny in an article written in 1957. She continued to develop various hysterical symptoms, made life unbearable for her family, and grew to resemble her mother (whom Freud dismissed as a typical case of 'housewife psychosis'). According to Deutsch, Dora tortured her husband throughout their marriage; he concluded that 'her marriage had served only to cover up her distaste of men' (Deutsch, 1957: 166). Dora suffers continuously from psychosomatic constipation, and dies from cancer of the colon. Deutsch concludes that 'Her death . . . seemed a blessing to those who were close to her. She had been, as my informant phrased it, one of the most repulsive hysterics he had ever met' (Deutsch, 1957: 167).

It may be gratifying to see the young, proud Dora as a radiant example of feminine revolt (as does Cixous); but we should not forget the image of the old, nagging, whining and complaining Dora she later becomes, achieving nothing. Hysteria is not, *pace* Hélène Cixous, the incarnation of the revolt of women forced to silence, but rather a declaration of defeat, the realization that there is no other way out. Hysteria is, as Catherine Clément perceives, a cry for help when defeat becomes real, when the woman sees that she is efficiently gagged and chained to her feminine role.

Now if the hysterical woman is gagged and chained, Freud posits himself as their liberator. And if the emancipatory project of psychoanalysis fails in the case of Dora, it is because Freud the liberator happens also to be, objectively, on the side of oppression. He is a male in patriarchal society, and moreover not just any male, but an educated



Dora's father with Frau K

bourgeois male, incarnating *malgré lui* patriarchal values. His own emancipatory project profoundly conflicts with his political and social role as an oppressor of women.

The most telling instance of this deeply unconscious patriarchal ideology in *Dora* is to be found in Freud's obsession with the sources of his patient's sexual information. After stressing the impossibility of tracing the sources of Dora's sexual information (Freud, 1977: 62), Freud nevertheless continually returns to the subject, suggesting alternately that the source may have been books belonging to a former governess (Freud, 1977: 68), Mantegazza's *Physiology of Love* (Freud, 1977: 97), or an encyclopaedia (Freud 1977: 140). He finally realizes that there must have been an *oral* source of information, in addition to the avid reading of forbidden books, then sees, extremely belatedly, that the oral source must have been none other than the beloved Frau K.

The one hypothesis that Freud does not entertain is that the source of oral information may have been Dora's mother – the mother who is traditionally charged with the sexual education of the daughters. This omission is wholly symptomatic of Freud's treatment of Dora's mother. Although he indicates Dora's identification with her mother (Freud, 1977: 111), he nevertheless strongly insists that Dora had withdrawn completely from her mother's influence (Freud, 1977: 50). Dora's apparent hatred of her mother is mobilized as evidence for this view.

But Freud ought to know better than to accept a daughter's hatred of her mother as an inevitable consequence of the mother's objective unlikeableness ('housewife's psychosis'). Even his own oedipal explanation of Dora's rejection of Herr K. should contribute to a clearer understanding of the mother's importance for Dora. Oedipally speaking, Dora would be seen as the mother's rival in that competition for the father's love, but this rivalry also implies the necessity of identifying with the mother: the daughter must become like the mother in order to be loved by the father. Freud notes that Dora is behaving like a jealous wife, and that this behaviour shows that 'she was clearly putting herself in her mother's place' (Freud, 1977: 90), but he draws no further conclusions from these observations. He also points out that Dora identifies with Frau K., her father's mistress, but is still quite content to situate her mainly in relation to her father and Herr K. He fails to see that Dora is caught in an ambivalent relationship to her mother and an idealizing and identifying relationship to Frau K., the other mother-figure in this text. Freud's patriarchal prejudices force him to ignore relationships between women and instead centre all his attention on relationships with men. This grievous underestimation of the importance of other women for Dora's psychic development contributes decisively to the failure of the analysis and the cure – not least in that it makes Freud unaware of *preoedipal* causes for Dora's hysteria. Maria Ramas writes: 'By Freud's own admission, the deepest level of meaning of hysterical symptoms is not a thwarted desire for the father, but a breakthrough of the prohibited desire for the mother (Ramas, 1980: 498).

Sexuality and Epistemology

Freud's peculiar interest in the sources of Dora's sexual information does not, however, merely reveal that for as long as possible he avoids considering oral relations between women as such a source; it also indicates that Freud overestimates the importance of this question. There is nothing in Dora's story to indicate that a successful analysis depends on the elucidation of this peripheral problem. Why then would Freud be so obsessed by these sources of knowledge?

Firstly, because he himself desires total knowledge: his aim is nothing less than the *complete elucidation* of Dora, despite his insistence on the fragmentary nature of his

material. The absence of information on this one subject is thus tormenting, since it so obviously ruins the dream of completeness. But such a desire for total, absolute knowledge exposes a fundamental assumption in Freud's epistemology. Knowledge for Freud is a finished, closed whole. Possession of knowledge means possession of power. Freud, the doctor, is curiously proud of his hermeneutical capacities. After having interpreted Dora's fingering of her little purse as an admission of infantile masturbation, he writes with evident satisfaction:

When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish (Freud, 1977: 114).

Freud in other words possesses powers more compelling than those of hypnosis. He is the one who discloses and unlocks secrets; he is Oedipus solving the Sphinx's riddle. But like Oedipus he is ravaged by a terrible anxiety: the fear of castration. If Freud cannot solve Dora's riddle, the unconscious punishment for this failure will be castration. In this struggle for the possession of knowledge, a knowledge which is power, Dora reveals herself both as Freud's alter ego and as his rival. She possesses the secret Freud is trying to discover. At this point we must suspect Freud of counter-transference to Dora: he identifies with the hysterical Dora in the search for information about sexual matters. Freud has his own secret, as Dora has hers: the analytic technique, which, as we have seen, cannot be exposed without causing 'total confusion'. Freud jealously keeps his secret, as Dora keeps hers: her homosexual desire for Frau K.

But since Dora is a woman, and a rather formidable one at that, a young lady who hitherto has had only scorn for the incompetent (and, surely, impotent) doctors who have treated her so far, she becomes a threatening rival for Freud. If he does not win the fight for knowledge, he will also be revealed as incompetent/impotent, his compelling powers will be reduced to nothing, he will be castrated. If Dora wins the knowledge-game, her model for knowledge will emerge victorious, and Freud's own model will be destroyed. Freud here finds himself between Scylla and Charybdis: if he identifies with Dora in the search for knowledge, he becomes a woman, that is to say, castrated. But if he chooses to cast her as his rival, he *must* win out, or the punishment will be castration.

This last point (that the punishment in case of defeat will be castration) requires further explanation. We have seen that Dora's sources of knowledge have been characterized as female, oral and scattered. Freud, on the contrary, presents his knowledge as something which creates a unitary whole. In both cases we are discussing sexual knowledge. But Freud's own paradigmatic example of the desire for sexual knowledge is the sexual curiosity in children, and Freud's most important text on this topic is *Little Hans*. When the reader moves from *Dora* to *Little Hans*, she is struck by the remarkable difference in tone between the two texts. The five year old little Hans, straining to understand the mysteries of sexuality, is strongly encouraged in his epistemophilia (Freud's own word, from *Three Essays on Sexuality*). Freud never ceases to express his admiration for the intelligence of the little boy, in such laudatory statements as 'Here the little boy was displaying a really unusual degree of clarity' (Freud, 1977: 206), or 'Little Hans has by a bold stroke taken the conduct of the analysis into his own hands. By means of a brilliant symptomatic act . . .' (Freud, 1977: 246). This tone is far removed from Freud's stern admonitions of Dora, his continuous



Dora with Herr K

et tu quoque ripostes to her interpretation of her own situation.

Why this differential treatment? It is arguable that in *Little Hans* Freud equates the desire for knowledge and the construction of theories with the desire to discover the role of the penis in procreation. The penis, in other words, becomes the epistemological object *par excellence* for Freud. But if this is so, knowledge and theory must be conceptualized as whole, rounded, finished – just like the penis. Little Hans becomes in this sense a penis for Freud. He is both a pleasurable object to be studied, a source of excitement and enthusiasm, *and* Freud's double: a budding sexual theoretician emerging to confirm Freud's own epistemological activities. But where Little Hans confirms, Dora threatens. Her knowledge cannot be conceptualized as a whole; it is dispersed and has been assembled piecemeal from feminine sources. Dora's epistemological model becomes the female genitals, which in Freud's vision emerge as unfinished, diffuse, and fragmentary; they cannot add up to a complete whole and must therefore be perceived as castrated genitals. If Freud were to accept Dora's epistemological model, it would be tantamount to rejecting the penis as the principal symbol for human desire for knowledge, which again would mean accepting castration.

Freud's masculine psyche therefore perceives Dora as more fundamentally threatening than he can consciously express. Instead, his fear of epistemological castration manifests itself in various disguises: in his obsessive desire to discover the sources of Dora's knowledge, and in his oddly intense discussion of the fragmentary status of the *Dora* text. To admit that there are holes in one's knowledge is tantamount to transforming the penis to a hole, that is to say to transforming the man into a woman. Holes, empty spaces, open areas are at all cost to be avoided; and with this in mind we can discern further layers of meaning in the passage quoted earlier:

In face of the incompleteness of my analytic results, I had no choice but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity. I have restored what is missing (Freud, 1977: 41).

'The priceless through mutilated relics of antiquity' are not only Dora's story: they are Dora herself, her genitals and the feminine epistemological model. Freud makes sure that the message here is clear: 'mutilated' is his usual way of describing the effect of castration, and 'priceless' also means just what it says: price – less, without value. For how can there be value when the valuable piece has been cut off? The relics are mutilated, the penis has been cut.² Freud's task is therefore momentous: he must 'restore what is missing', his penis must fill the epistemological hole represented by Dora.

But such a task can only be performed by one who possesses what is missing. And this is precisely what Freud occasionally doubts in his text: the fear of castration is also the fear of discovering that one has already been castrated. Freud's hesitation in *Dora* between insisting on completeness and admitting fragmentary status, indicates that in his text the penis is playing a kind of *fort-da* game with its author (now you have it, now you don't).³ Freud's book about Dora is the narrative of an intense power-struggle between two protagonists – a struggle in which the male character's virility is at stake, and in which he by no means always has the upper hand.

When Dora dismisses Freud like a servant, she paradoxically rescues him from further epistemological insecurity. He is left, then, the master of the *writing* of Dora. And even though his text bears the scars of the struggle between him and his victim, it is a victorious Freud who publishes it. Dora dismissed him, but Freud got his revenge: Dora was the name Freud's own sister, Rosa, had foisted on her maid in place of her real one, which also was Rosa (Freud, 1975: 301-2). So Ida Bauer, in a bitter historical irony, was made famous under the name of a servant after all.

Freud's epistemology is clearly phallogocentric. The male is the bearer of knowledge; he alone has the power to penetrate woman and text, woman's role is to let herself be penetrated by such truth. Such epistemological phallogocentrism is by no means specifically Freudian; on the contrary, it has so far enjoyed universal sway in our patriarchal civilization, and one could hardly expect Freud to emerge untouched by it. It is politically important, however, to point out that this pathological division of knowledge in masculine totality and feminine fragment is totally mystifying and mythological. There is absolutely no evidence for the actual existence of two such gender-determined sorts of knowledge, to be conceptualized as parallel to the shapes of human genitals. Dora can be perceived as the bearer of feminine epistemology in the study only because Freud selected her as his opponent in a war over cognition, creating her as his symbolic antagonist. To champion Dora's 'feminine values' means meekly accepting Freud's own definitions of masculine and feminine. Power always creates its own definitions, and this is particularly true of the distinctions between masculine and feminine constructed by patriarchal society. Nowhere is patriarchal ideology to be seen more clearly than in the definition of the feminine as the negative of the masculine – and this is precisely how Freud defines Dora and the 'feminine' epistemology she is supposed to represent.

To undermine this phallogocentric epistemology means to expose its lack of 'natural' foundation. In the case of *Dora*, however, we have been able to do this only because of Freud's own theories of femininity and sexuality. The attack upon phallogocentrism must come from within, since there can be no 'outside', no space where true femininity, untainted by patriarchy, can be kept intact for us to discover. We can only destroy the mythical and mystifying constructions of patriarchy by using its own weapons. We have no others.

Notes

Toril Moi has been active in various groups trying to promote feminist literary criticism in Norway. She will be European visiting fellow in Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1981-2, and is currently working on a study of jealousy in French literature.

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- 1 All references to *Dora* are taken from the Pelican edition of Freud's works, see references under Freud.
- 2 Freud always assumes that castration means the cutting off of the penis, this is quite odd since in the case of real castration it is of course the testicles that are cut off.
- 3 The *fort-da* game is the game in which the child by rejecting and retrieving a toy enacts the absence and presence of the mother. *Fort-da* means roughly 'here – gone'.

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