

Exit Dora: Freud's Patient Takes Leave

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Why did “Dora” leave Sigmund Freud—why did she end her psychoanalytic treatment with him prematurely? This question haunts Freud’s Dora study, his first extensive and perhaps most famous narrative of a psychoanalytic treatment. I pursue this question through a close reading of Freud’s text. I focus not only on the interaction between Freud and Dora but also on the literary qualities of “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria” (1905)—qualities that place this work firmly in the tradition of Viennese fin de siècle drama and prose.

The Long Good-Bye

THE STORY IS EASY TO TELL. ITS PLOT RESEMBLES A FIN DE SIÈCLE drama, a play by Schnitzler, perhaps, in which the heroine, a sweet young thing (*ein süßes Mädel*), would leave a slightly bitter aftertaste. It bears features of a tragic play by Ibsen, too, transposed to central Europe and staged in Vienna’s ninth district. Here as there, we

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encounter a family, and a society, for whom every unspoken word will gain importance and every movement and gesture achieve significance. There are rules to the game, but they are not easy to follow.

These are the protagonists. First, there is the young girl, who is alienated from her mother and seems not to show an interest in anything other than cleaning her apartment. The girl's father has been afflicted with syphilis for many years. The father maintains an affair with another, married woman. The girl knows this woman, gets along with her, and becomes friendly with her children, but the woman's husband wants to be the girl's friend as well—too much of a friend, perhaps. Why doesn't her father notice?

Indeed, the husband wants to be alone with the girl—and he regularly sends her presents—but he also flirts and has a brief affair with his children's governess (after all, he can get nothing out of his wife, as he declares repeatedly). Thus, the husband approaches the girl. One time, at a lake at a vacation place, he grabs her and presses her close to his body. What is she to do? She runs away.

We can see that much is happening in this story, but perhaps there is also very little going on. If we look at it closely, the plot is rather spare. A young girl, accompanied by her father, visits a doctor with whom her father is acquainted. She has appointments with him for a few weeks, lies down on his couch, and keeps still. Sometimes she talks. The doctor, for his part, no longer wants to be a medical doctor, the kind of doctor concerned with physical illnesses and the writing of prescriptions. He does nothing but listen. And he talks as well. He poses questions and implores the girl to remember things, but in the end it is not the girl, but the doctor, who knows best. He explains the story to her and tells her what she has done and what has really happened. But how does he know? Was he also at the lake? What is she to do now? She runs away.

Fourteen is such a difficult age for any girl, whether she is at a lake or in a doctor's office. And there is not much that she can be thankful for. What does she get? She did not really have an affair, and she does not get well in her treatment, either (her therapy does not come to a conclusion, and her story does not have a proper end). But which affair would have been desirable? Which illness should have been cured? And, now, as the girl leaves the doctor's office and ceases treatment suddenly—even though she would return once briefly, to the husband, to give him a piece of her mind, and to the doctor, to let

him know that she would like to keep this mind all to herself—nobody knows how things would have proceeded had she stayed or how they should have proceeded with a cure in sight.

The doctor, who wrote this story down—more than 100 years ago, in 1901—changed the girl's age and made her two years older. He also changed the dates of her treatment and gave her a different name. Before the girl ran away, she gave him two weeks' notice, much like a governess or a maid would, or perhaps as she would have done had the doctor been her governess or maid (roles such as these are, at times, indistinguishable). And thus, the doctor gave her the name of a former maid and nursemaid in his own parents' home, at the time of his youth. The doctor chose for the girl the name *Dora* and entered her in his story as such. His name was *Sigmund Freud*—though it was really *Sigismund*, but he, too, had changed his own name at some earlier point. Did Freud consider that the maid of his youth was not really named *Dora*, either, but *Rose*, just like his sister? And that his parents had therefore asked their maid to name herself differently—namely, *Dora*? Later, Freud remembered this, because names, as he knew all too well, had always some meaning. "Poor people," Freud (1901) remarked in pity, when learning about the maid's change of names, "they cannot even keep their own names!" (p. 241). But when the "next day" he "was looking for a name for someone *who could not keep her own*, 'Dora' was the only one to occur" to him (p. 241).

And the story? Freud wrote it down and sent it to a scholarly journal, but, shortly after its submission, he asked that it be returned. He published it four years later, in 1905, but even then it was still very much a fragment, and he was very well aware of that. He called it "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," and the German title, "Bruchstück einer Hysterie-Analyse," emphasizes its violently ruptured, "broken" nature. It is a *Bruchstück*. It also states the diagnosis that he would assign to Dora's illness, and he later published it in French, no less: a "petite hystérie" (Freud, 1905a, p. 23). Freud was aware that Dora's story was a fragment, and he worried that it would have to remain a fragment, although he really wanted to write it down completely. But had he done so, and told it all, perhaps it would not have been a case study at all. Instead, it became his second one, and, today, it is quite possibly his most famous account of a therapy. Not to be able to say everything, not to be able to explain oneself completely, was not only Freud's problem, but Dora's as well, and this

fact, if one may call it thus, stands at the center of this case study, and of the genre of the case study. Something is always amiss, whether in regard to the female patient or the story itself.

The difficulty in trying to fix Dora to a definite place—the lake, the couch, even the pages of Freud’s publication—seems to be bound to the notion of hysteria itself.¹ Hysteria seems to resist any stillness or immobility. The term relates to an illness to which women in particular seem prone and refers to the Greek word *usterus*, which designates a specific part of the female anatomy. Earlier, the Egyptians described a strange condition by which a uterus leaves its customary position and moves within the woman’s body. Greek doctors transmitted prescriptions to stabilize the woman’s wandering organ by applying vapors to her lower body or by having her drink special liquids. A wandering uterus seemed to be peculiarly mirrored in wild gestures, and the woman was unable to control either; it is reflected in a limitless stream of words and in uncontrollable behavior. As so often before, Plato, who was a wise man who could lend his voice even to Socrates, knew the answer to this problem. In his dialogue *Timaeus*, he described this precarious situation exactly. He explained a woman’s womb and uterus to be

a living thing within her with a desire for childbearing. Now when this remains unfruitful for an unseasonably long period of time, it is extremely frustrated and travels everywhere up and down her body. It blocks up her respiratory passages, and by not allowing her to breathe it throws her into extreme emergencies, and visits all sort of other illnesses upon her until finally the woman’s desire and the man’s love bring them together [Plato, trans. by Cooper and Hutchison, 1997, p. 1290].

The philosopher Plato knew that childbearing was therapeutic, and the physician Freud was hoping for his female patients’ marriages and children as well. Thus, Freud (1905a) struck an optimistic note at the end of his case study relating to Dora: “In the meantime the girl has married” (p. 122). In addition, he had heard that she had

¹In regard to the notion of “hysteria” and the history of the term, see David-Ménard (1989).

become the mother of a son, and this was certainly good fortune for any woman. Although he did not mention it explicitly, Freud rejoiced about this son's birth as if it would be Dora's own rebirth, because now, he wrote, she "had been reclaimed once more by the realities of life"² (Freud, 1905a, p. 23). Thus, Dora's story ended on a hopeful note after all, and with a speculation that implies her return.

French Lessons

Freud's attempt to force an ending does not mean that he was not aware of the ultimate failure of his psychoanalytic treatment. Although psychoanalysis itself may often seem to be an interminable treatment, the abrupt termination of this particular analysis was too early, for sure. Dora, we feel, would have had much more to tell, and Freud, we feel (and he knew this, too), did not come to his own conclusion with his story of Dora, either. Even if he assumed that transference (the patient's special bond to her doctor) would form the center of the psychoanalytic process, and that Dora embraced him as a father figure, Freud became increasingly uncertain whether this was really the case here, or whether matters were not more complicated still. He began to wonder who he was for Dora, and whom he saw in Dora. The story's "round" (*la Ronde*), which would be so resonant of a Schnitzler play (though staged here by a group of invalids), was broken by Dora herself. She left, and not just once. This leave-taking happened against Freud's clear advice. How could she not have been in love with the husband at the lake? Was he not a healthy man? But, because of Dora's refusal to honor his advice, Freud became implicated in the round and took his place with the other protagonists. Although he did not have a name for it yet, Freud discovered counter-transference as another function of psychoanalytic therapy: the doctor's special bond to the patient. When Dora left him, too, he did not even have time enough to say good-bye. To whom or to what?

Dora, who was taken to Freud by her father, himself a former patient of Freud, did not suffer from an ailment that would be as easily diagnosed as a wandering uterus. But Dora had a chronic cough and

²The German text refers simply to "life."

problems with her respiratory ducts, and she limped at times. Her first visit to Freud was precipitated by a letter she had left behind at home—a letter that provided evidence of her suicidal tendencies, if not a suicide plan. Dora was not allowed to leave this easily. What was Freud to do? Dora's complaints were simply symptoms for him, and, just as Dora had tried to find some clues to her complicated family situation, to "read" it, to give it some sense, Freud wanted to devise a therapeutic process that would be able to read these symptoms. The scene at the lake, for example, could give an answer to Dora's breathing difficulties:

She declared that she could still feel upon the upper part of her body the pressure of Herr K.'s embrace. In accordance with certain rules of symptom-formation which I have come to know, and at the same time taking into account certain other of the patient's peculiarities, which were otherwise inexplicable—such as her unwillingness to walk past any man whom she saw engaged in eager or affectionate conversation with a lady—I have formed in my own mind the following reconstruction of the scene. I believe that during the man's passionate embrace she felt not merely his kiss upon her lips but also the pressure of his erect member against her body. This perception was revolting to her; it was dismissed from her memory, repressed, and replaced by the innocent sensation of pressure upon her thorax, which in turn derived an excessive intensity from its repressed source. Once more, therefore, we find a displacement from the lower part of the body to the upper [Freud, 1905a, pp. 29–30].

The hysterical movements are reflected here as a displacement resulting in a symptom. Dora felt the sexual excitement of the husband, whom Freud called Herr K, and Freud (1905a) explained, "The pressure of the erect member probably led to an analogous change in the corresponding female organ, the clitoris; and the excitement of this second erotogenic zone was referred by a process of displacement to the simultaneous pressure against the thorax and became fixed there" (p. 30). Not the sexually aroused man, but the girl's experience of her own sexuality, led to repression of this memory and its displacement as a symptom. In this explanation, Dora gained not only sexual

maturity (the years Freud added to Dora's age may not be irrelevant here)³ but also "normal" sexual behavior, at least for Vienna's ninth district. But something else had to be considered as well. Dora's father was supposed to be impotent, and such a young girl as Dora must have thought about his relationship with Frau K and speculated as to its nature. Perhaps Dora had learned of various sexual acts by reading or hearing about them; young girls are, as Freud knew, quite curious, and they learn with ease. Thus, Freud had to presume that Dora knew about fellatio, a sexual act the doctor could describe only in Latin, *per os* ("orally, with one's mouth"; Freud, 1905a, p. 48). But Dora's mouth remained silent at this point in the analysis; she did not want to tell Freud about any sexual act, what she really knew. Instead, she simply coughed. And Freud could not press her close to him.

But repression, and not pressure, was what seemed to be at stake here. That hysteria could be caused by a kind of repression of female sexuality had been known by Plato, but Freud formulated it thus:

No one can undertake the treatment of a case of hysteria until he is convinced of the impossibility of avoiding the mention of sexual subjects, or unless he is prepared to allow himself to be convinced by experience. The right attitude is: *pour faire une omelette il faut casser des oeufs* ["to make an omelette, one has to break eggs"] [Freud, 1905a, p. 49].

This kitchen news had to be conveyed to the female patient, and false embarrassment vis-à-vis a girl or woman was simply misplaced. Just as the topic of Herr K's erect member was unavoidable in analysis, so too is the topic of sexuality:

The best way of speaking about such things is to be dry and direct; and that is at the same time the method furthest removed from the prurience with which the same subjects are handled in "society," and to which girls and woman alike are so thoroughly accustomed. I call bodily organs and processes by their technical names, and I tell these to the patient if they—the names, I

³In regard to "Dora's" (Ida Bauer's) biography, see Decker (1991) and Appignanesi and Forrester (1992).

mean—happen to be unknown to her. “*J’appelle un chat un chat*” [“I call a cat a cat”] [Freud, 1905a, p. 48].

A name, this physician knew all too well, always has some meaning—except that the French *chat* or *chatte* is no technical term but is Parisian slang for the female genitals. Thus, language offers its own displacement. French is added here to a direct, technical discourse about sexuality that also includes Latin words. And this Latin may be, quite simply, a *Küchenlatein*, as it is called in Germany, a popular Latin used in the kitchen, just as the French may be the proper tongue for the preparation of eggs.

French is also the language that demarcates the origin of the psychoanalytic discovery. Years later, in his study “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement,” Freud (1914) recalled not one but three fathers responsible for his discovery of the fundamental importance of the repression of female sexuality for the etiology of hysteria. The first father was Josef Breuer, a doctor and early friend of Freud who had treated Freud’s first hysterical patient, Anna O. During a walk with Freud (we do not know if it took place at a lake), Breuer had told him that nervous illnesses are always “secrets of the alcove.” Freud confessed that he did not understand, and Breuer proceeded to translate the French *alcôve*. These were secrets of the “marriage bed,” he explained (Freud, 1914, p. 13).⁴

The second father of psychoanalysis was the famous Parisian doctor Jean-Martin Charcot, who had studied with Freud and who had once interrupted one of his lessons to exclaim, “Mais, dans des cas pareils c’est toujours la chose génitale, toujours . . . toujours . . . toujours” [but in such cases, the genitals are always at issue, always . . . always . . . always; Freud, 1914, p. 14).

The third father of psychoanalysis was the gynecologist Rudolf Chrobak, who jokingly suggested prescribing *Rx Penis normalis dosim repetatur!* (“Normal penis in repeated dosage”; Freud, 1914, p. 15) as a cure for a female patient—about which Freud could only briefly remark, “Epouser les idées de [one should embrace the ideas of] . . . no uncommon figure of speech, at any rate in French” (p. 15).

⁴The English translation includes the French *secrets d’alcôve* in Freud’s text. Hertz (1983) relied on Freud’s French expressions and on their English translations to turn *Geheimnisse des Alkoven* into an interpretation of *secrets d’alcôve* (p. 238).

Freud took these thoughts, this banter, these teasing conversations between men seriously. He described these remarks as leading him to the origin of psychoanalysis, a discipline that he would develop further while listening to hysterical women. Thus, the name of this discipline may be of French origin after all: *J'appelle un chat un chat*.

Freud had already gathered early that his patient, whom he would name in dry and direct terminology *Dora*, carried secrets, and that she would pine away for a prescription that only Herr K could fill. But another, real secret was left for him to discover—that she knew about those *secrets d'alcôve*. How could she know? He did not doubt for a moment Dora's fully developed female sexuality. But where did this young girl learn French? Was she present when Freud met with those other, joking men?

Vienna Woods

Freud dated his treatment of Dora to 1900 and commenced describing her illness by referring to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a publication that would carry the same date:

In my *Interpretation of Dreams*, . . . I showed that dreams in general can be interpreted, and that after the work of interpretation has been completed they can be replaced by perfectly correctly constructed thoughts which find a recognizable position in the texture of the mind. I wish to give an example in the following pages of the only practical application of which the art of interpreting dreams seems to admit [Freud, 1905a, p. 15].

So, Dora's case is not just that of the treatment of a patient but is also practical evidence for Freud's theory. That Freud had seen Dora a year earlier seems irrelevant here, because his *Interpretation of Dreams* had actually appeared in 1899. Freud postdated the book for publication so that he could truly claim it to be the work of the new century. Thus, Freud's case study follows his work on the interpretation of dreams and represents a wish fulfillment even in its publication date. Two of Dora's dreams are told and interpreted in an appendix to his case study; at the same time, they are at the center of Freud's analysis of hysteria. Although the dreams seem to have been

added belatedly, they include the only words we have from Dora—words that Freud claimed to have written down just after his patient's visits, after each of her still temporary leaves. One of the dreams was reported as follows:

I was walking about in a town which I did not know. I saw streets and squares which were strange to me. Then I came into a house where I lived, went to my room, and found a letter from Mother lying there. She wrote saying that as I had left home without my parents' knowledge she had not wished to write to me to say that Father was ill. "Now he is dead, and if you like you can come." I then went to the station ["Bahnhof"] and asked about a hundred times: "Where is the station?" I always got the answer: "Five minutes." I then saw a thick wood before me which I went into, and there I asked a man whom I met. He said to me: "Two and a half hours more." He offered to accompany me. But I refused and went alone. I saw the station in front of me and could not reach it. At the same time I had the usual feeling of anxiety that one has in dreams when one cannot move forward. Then I was at home. I must have been traveling in the meantime, but I know nothing about that. I walked into the porter's lodge, and inquired for our flat. The maidservant opened the door to me and replied that Mother and the others were already at the cemetery ["Friedhof"] [Freud, 1905a, p. 94].

Freud's (1905a) interpretation of this dream begins with a translation, *il appelle un chat un chat*. *Bahnhof* ("station") and *Friedhof* ("cemetery") seemed to him to be placeholders for female genitals, related to *Vorhof*, *vestibulum*, or *vestibule*, or, literally, *forecourt*, a region of the female genitals that can be seen from the background of the "thick wood" of the pubic hair (p. 99). "Here was a symbolic geography of sex!" he exclaimed in writing (p. 99). He continued, "If this interpretation were correct, therefore, there lay concealed behind the first situation in the dream a phantasy of defloration, the phantasy of a man seeking to force an entrance into the female genitals" (pp. 99–100).

Freud (1905a) had hardly any difficulties in confirming the gender roles by which he interpreted the dream of a youth "devoured by sexual curiosity" (p. 99), a dream that would perhaps also finally

constitute a response to an acquired knowledge about sexuality. But the question “What does woman want?” remained unanswered for him still. In his psychoanalytic sketch of human development, Freud had, up until then, concentrated on the development of boys. He traced the boy’s oedipal conflict—the boy’s love of mother and rivalry with father—as well as his discovery of gender difference and hence the origin of his castration anxiety (cf. Freud, 1905b, and Freud, 1916–1917). But how would this development look in a girl, whose body anticipates this loss, whose body is a mere “fragment” that lacks something from the very beginning, whose body can never achieve physical perfection and therefore has to resemble a case of hysteria and its case history? Is it not exactly the treatment of a hysteric that would make Freud aware of that lack in women, just as a boy’s anxiety would stem from this newly gained awareness to have a different, more complete, but perhaps fragile body?

Later, Freud (1931) reflected on female sexuality in more detail. The primary bond to one’s mother can last longer than expected in a girl, he wrote, and the transfer to a second love object, the father, may not even occur at times. A woman may therefore “be stuck” in her original bond to her mother, as Freud explained. Thus, he had to correct himself: “The pre-Oedipus phase in women gains an importance which we have not attributed to it hitherto” (Freud, 1931, p. 226). And he continued to voice the

suspicion that phase of attachment to the mother is especially intimately related to the aetiology of hysteria, which is not surprising when we reflect that both the phase and the neurosis are characteristically feminine, and further, that in this dependence on the mother we have the germ of later paranoia in women [Freud, 1931, p. 227].

That a woman would turn away from a man (as Dora had done at the lake, when she rebuffed Herr K’s advances), and even feel disgusted by him and just run away, may perhaps find an explanation precisely in the acceptance of her position as woman: “She [*das Weib*] acknowledges the fact of her castration, and with it, too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority; but she rebels against this unwelcome state of affairs” (Freud, 1931, p. 229). It should not surprise us, then, that Freud used a different German word here—that he

exchanged *die Frau*, a word of female gender, with *das Weib*, a neutral-gender word that shares the masculine grammatical aspect (to *ihm*, not *ihr*, could be assigned such an experience). Even the German grammar does not lack hysterical elements, it would seem.

But Freud is not the only one who supplemented Dora's dream with a story. Dora did it as well:

A young cousin of Dora's had come to stay with them for the holidays, and Dora had had to show him round Vienna. This cause was, it is true, a matter of complete indifference to her. But the cousin's visit reminded her of her own first brief visit to Dresden. On that occasion she had been a stranger and had wandered about, not failing, of course, to visit the famous picture gallery. Another cousin of hers, who was with them and knew Dresden, had wanted to act as a guide and take her round the gallery. *But she declined, and went alone*, and stopped in front of the pictures that appealed to her. She remained *two hours* in front of the Sistine Madonna, rapt in silent admiration. When I asked her what had pleased her so much about the picture she could find no clear answer to make. At last she said: "The Madonna" [Freud, 1905a, p. 96].

Thus, we learn that Dora had left a man before Herr K. We also finally learn where she went. She visited an art gallery that is a major tourist attraction, situated in a town known, because of its Italianate architecture, as *Elb-Florenz*, a Florence at the river Elbe. There, she wanted to see a particular Italian picture, to which she did not offer two weeks' notice but two hours of attention. In this art gallery, she did not search for a father. Instead, she found an image of the mother figure *par excellence*: the Madonna. "The 'Madonna' was obviously Dora herself," Freud (1905a) added in a footnote (p. 104, n. 2). He explained that Dora had an admirer who quite obviously worshiped her, and that she behaved in a motherly way toward Herr K's children. But what if Dora was no Madonna at all? Would you meet one in the woods?

Years later, Freud complemented this story with his own travel experience in Italy. In 1920, he worked on a long, speculative essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which he began with a description of the repetition compulsion—the need to leave something and have it

return or the need to leave and return oneself. He also addressed this compulsion in "The 'Uncanny'" (1919), an essay written at the same time. In that essay, we find a touristy experience presented not as a dream but as an anecdote. Freud, too, went abroad, and he entered the country of the Madonna:

The factor of the repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling. From what I have observed, this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream states. As I was walking, one hot summer afternoon, through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was unknown to me, I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another *detour* at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery. Other situations which have in common with my adventure an unintended recurrence of the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of uncanniness. So, for instance, when, caught in a mist perhaps, one has lost one's way in a mountain forest, every attempt to find the marked or familiar path may bring one back again and again to one and the same spot, which one can identify by some particular landmark [pp. 236–237].

Freud, too, could think about the woods, even if he would become surprised when caught in a fog. His dreamlike experience in a small Italian town obviously turned into a sexual geography all its own. Dora wanted to sit down quietly and watch the Madonna in its confined museum space. Freud, in turn, circled the same street again and

again. There, painted women leaned out of their windows and eagerly observed him. He may not have reached a railroad station, but he returned to the same street or place in the woods repeatedly. Was his experience therefore less hysterical?

Distance and proximity, stillness and movement, Madonna and Whore oppose each other here. What would it mean if Freud did not fear repeated entry into the same street but was apprehensive about what the women, staring from their windows, wanted to see in him? Would he resemble a father—or a Herr K, eager to commence an affair? Or would he rather resemble the Madonna—an image that can be viewed for hours, stared at repeatedly, from one’s own window ledge? This time, Freud ran away.

Motherhood

Dora had an earlier dream:

A House was on fire. My father was standing beside my bed and woke me up. I dressed myself quickly. Mother wanted to stop and save her jewel-case; but Father said: “I refuse to let myself and my two children be burnt for the sake of your jewel-case.” We hurried downstairs, and as soon as I was outside I woke up [Freud, 1905a, p. 64].

Here, too, Freud (1905a) eagerly noted a sexual geography: the “jewel-case” not only refers to one of Herr K’s presents to Dora but was also a “favorite expression . . . for the female genitals” (p. 69). In the dream content itself, Freud saw an indication to the contrary. The situation, from which Dora’s father had tried to rescue her, describes precisely her wish to offer her father what her mother was not willing to give. In a further replacement, however, Freud put Herr K in the father’s place:

The dream confirms once more what I had already told you before you dreamt it—that you are summoning up your old love for your father in order to protect yourself against your love for Herr K. But what do all these efforts show? Not only that you

are afraid of Herr K., but that you are still more afraid of yourself, and of the temptation you feel to yield to him. In short, these efforts prove once more how deeply you loved him [Freud, 1905a, p. 70].

“Naturally Dora would not follow me in this part of the interpretation,” Freud (1905a, p. 70) wrote, but the question remains: Why did she reject Freud as well as Herr K? And why did she do so “naturally”?

Dora's refusal to accept Freud's interpretation may indeed have “natural” causes, but Freud became aware of them only later in this analysis—a little too late, perhaps. Next to Dora's father and Herr K and Freud's own position as a father figure and potential replacement for his patient's affection, there was still Dora's mother, who was probably just washing floors at home while Dora lingered at the lake. Quickly, too quickly perhaps, Freud was eager to agree with the girl and her father:

I never made the mother's acquaintance. From the accounts given me by the girl and her father I was led to imagine her as an uncultivated woman and above all as a foolish one, who had concentrated all her interests upon domestic affairs, especially since her husband's illness and the estrangement to which it led. She presented a picture, in fact, of what might be called the “housewife's psychosis” [Freud, 1905a, p. 20].

Is this what a Madonna looks like? No wonder Dora's father desired an affair, for he was, after all, quite “natural,” nothing but a normal man, and Frau K, who cared for him in a motherly way, seemed pleasant and attractive, even in Dora's eyes. Was she too attractive? Was she at the origin of Dora's knowledge about sexuality? Did they not read together an Italian book about female sexuality—Mantegazza's *Physiology of Love* (Freud, 1905a, p. 26)? Where else but in those Italian streets or books could Dora learn so much? Was the scene at the lake motivated not by any passion for Herr K but by attraction to, and identification with, his wife? At the end of his first description of the case, and before his interpretation of Dora's dreams, Freud (1905a) wrote:

I believe, therefore, that I am not mistaken in supposing that Dora's supervalent train of thought, which was concerned with her father's relations with Frau K., was designed not only for the purpose of suppressing her love for Herr K., which had once been conscious, but also to conceal her love for Frau K., which was in a deeper sense conscious [p. 62].

But just then, as the fog seemed to clear, Dora had left already. Freud (1905a) could do nothing more than add another note later:

The longer the interval of time that separates me from the end of this analysis, the more probable it seems to me that the fault in my technique lay in this omission: I failed to discover in time and to inform the patient that her homosexual (gynaecophilic) love for Frau K. was the strongest unconscious current in her mental life. . . . Before I had learnt the importance of the homosexual current of feeling in psychoneurotics, I was often brought to a standstill in the treatment of my cases or found myself in complete perplexity [p. 120, n. 1].

Perhaps, after all, Dora did Freud a favor when she left. Freud needed distance to recognize what he did not expect, and he still used a word, *gynaecophilic*, that was rare and foreign to anyone. As a result, not the exchange of sexual partners, not the more or less discreet affairs, not any sexual diseases seemed unexpected news to him. For Freud, or perhaps for fin de siècle Vienna in general, only in a woman's homoerotic desires could the round find its unexpected end.

Freud, who recognized this possibility late, belatedly, and, "naturally," from an always growing distance, now found a last reason for the failure of this analysis, and he could give it only in the absence of his patient—when it was impossible for him to offer his patient an explanation *per os*. Critics have therefore often doubted him. What could be saved of an analysis that did not really take this late interpretation into account? How could Freud understand the psyche of a young girl who did not simply love her father but identified with him? Freud (1905a) could only enter this newly discovered "deep-rooted homosexual love for Frau K." in a footnote (p. 105) and add it to his emerging psychoanalytic theory. Thus, Dora left much behind.

Woman's Complaints

Freud's case study is brief. Paradoxically, precisely because of Freud's failure to reach a conclusion, and because of the fragmentary nature of this study, it has become a paradigmatic text, and not only for psychoanalytic theory. Lacan (1966), whose authoritative tone would later mirror Freud's, wondered (or perhaps did not wonder) why Freud immediately thought of fellatio, but not cunnilingus, a sexual practice known between women. Lacan (pp. 215–226) was interested in the transference and countertransference problems exposed in Freud's text, especially Freud's own interest in Dora, and in a particular solution for her problems. In turn, Marcus (1974) read Freud's fragmentary case study as a modernist, literary text that could compete—and here Freud's chosen abbreviation *Herr K.* may gain importance—with Kafka's work but also with Schnitzler's and Joyce's. Cohn (1999) wanted to limit this literary quality and insisted on the difference between a case study and a work of fiction with respect to truth content and therapeutic goal (pp. 38–57). The psychoanalyst Mannoni (1978) consciously entered the realm of fiction when he lent Dora his voice and had her write a letter of sorts to her father (pp. 11–35). This letter would not be a suicide note but a note of good-bye to Freud. In this letter, we finally experience a revelation, though we are left with much uncertainty as well. Hertz (1983) compared Dora's experiences with what occurred in Henry James's novel *What Maisie Knew*. Hertz insisted on the different perspectives of the innocent child and the detective but also on the similes that are so important in this text—not because they help in discovering the unknown but because they hold back what is already known. But what is there to know, and what is knowingly kept secret?

Feminist theorists in particular have centered their attention on Dora's case. For Cixous (1975), for example, Dora is the model of a woman who is forced by men to act in a certain way but resists them. Her silence and her departure are nothing else but a protest. Thus, Cixous transformed Dora from a sick victim into a heroine; Dora becomes another Nora, eager to leave her doll's house. For Cixous, the hysteric becomes paradigmatic for woman in her feminine position. In contrast, Clément (1975) saw Dora as becoming a victim precisely by being a woman (cf. discussion in Hertz, 1983). Hysteria is not a protest but a reaction—and the illness of a society marked by

masculine, patriarchal behavior. Moi (1981) insisted as well on the patriarchic in Freud's seemingly therapeutic procedure.

Whether hysteria should characterize a woman, or become a disease of her own, may be an irrelevant question vis-à-vis its pathology. In both cases, hysteria belongs to the woman's realm and becomes a particular (either desired or to be avoided) female property, provoked into existence no longer by biology but by social circumstances and the presence of men. But a few critics, such as Showalter (1993), have begun to question this as well. Showalter turned to Freud once more to show that there could be male hysteria, and she claimed that it did indeed exist in a large number of soldiers who served in World War I (she describes a war neurosis that became an epidemic of sorts). Dora's case study also instigated attempts to describe the sexual attraction between women or, rather, to describe a woman who may desire a homosexual relationship.

Whether hysteria is an illness, an explanation for femininity itself, an illness not only of woman, or an illness that describes the relationship between women, it is a key point for psychoanalysis, for which Dora's case provides its own *roman à clef* (Freud, 1905a, p. 9). It is important to note that the question of why Dora behaved as she did was first posed by a man, who may have acted paternally but who may have also just followed ambivalently some traditional path of questioning, only to discover his own femininity, his own reflection as an image of the Madonna—now to be guarded as a secret as well. The positions of man as desirer (active subject) and woman as desiree (passive object) characterize not only Herr K's perspective but also Freud's own definitions of man and woman. Man has the phallus, woman is the phallus—Lacan would thus adapt Freud (cf. discussion in Weissberg, 1994). Rose (1978) would thus view desire itself as a definition of femininity, something that is neither subject nor object, that cannot gain any satisfaction, just because it is desire.

But even if the definition of femininity would not rely on the object position of woman, it would be related to the object character of woman in Dora's case, in which her own voice is hardly heard. And her case is not without model. Freud's teacher Charcot, specializing in the therapy of hysterics, wanted to heal patients through hypnosis. These patients were exposed to a public of medical students who could observe them and Charcot's medical treatment in a theater of anatomy of sorts. Brouillet painted a picture of such a scene in 1887.

The image, widely disseminated in print, is of a standing Charcot embracing a young woman, his patient Blanche Wittman, without pressing her body too closely (cf. commentary by Gilman, 1993). Wittman's blouse has slipped upward, her skirt is loose, her corset visible. With her body bent backward, her breasts push forward. Another woman, carefully dressed and wearing an apron, stands behind her and prepares a hospital chair. Everyone else in the room is a man. Charcot seems to watch the students, who seem to look at him, not at the scarcely clad patient. Because it is important to listen to their teacher's words, the students take notes. Charcot's lectures proceeded *per os*, and his students transposed them into written form. Thus, in a room at the Paris Salpêtrière (a sick room, an operating room, a school room, an anatomy cabinet) that strangely enough does not look too different from a Viennese coffee house where well-dressed men would gather, an encounter between a male doctor and his female patient is exposed to male glances and a female helping hand. Just in this way, Freud must have experienced his first encounters with hysterics. Brouillet's picture hung in Freud's office in Vienna and later in London as well (E. Freud, L. Freud, and Grubrich-Simitis, 1985, pp. 114–115); for Freud, this picture of one of the three fathers of psychoanalysis was no doubt a guiding image.

It may be such an image that Shields (2000) wanted to sketch when she put Dora, who previously had remained almost silent and invisible, like any good maid (see Robbins, 1986), into the center of her novel, *The Fig Eater*. Shields's book begins:

He stands up next to the girl's body. He looks down for a moment, then carefully steps over the narrow boards lying around it. He walks across the grass and joins the three men, waiting like mourners. No one speaks. The body is poised like a still life waiting for a painter [p. 3].

The body, which does not lie on any couch or stand in any woods or theater of anatomy, is found in a Vienna city park. Belonging to a girl named Dora, it seems to be displayed not just for description but for sight. Discovery of the corpse displaces Freud's report of symptoms, such as the physical pain, cramps, memory loss, or linguistic problems that would, according to Freud, define a hysteric. But Dora is no longer alive, and her body thus presented becomes part of a tradition

of female corpses that encompasses Edgar Allan Poe's cruel narratives as well as popular operas. Bronfen (1992) described this tradition of offering female corpses as objects of male desire (Poe had written that the most beautiful, ideal motive of literature would be the death of a beautiful woman). But this new corpse appears in a novel written by a woman, and, though Shields's Dora was murdered by a man, the crime is solved by a woman—a woman who is neither a psychoanalyst nor a detective but a Hungarian fortune-teller who believes in the mysterious wisdom of gypsies. This, too, should reflect Vienna at the turn of the century. Dora's novelistic death is, moreover, nothing else but a literary version of the tragic fate that Cixous and Clément (1975) had predicted when they described Dora's relationship with *Herr K*:

No woman would like to hear this, even if it is said about another woman: "My wife, the woman, who is my wife, is nothing to me." This is murder. This is how it must have been for Dora, who hears it and knows, that the governess or maid has heard it already, and she sees this woman dying—she sees her mother as well as the maid dying. She sees women massacred, just to make place for her. But she knows that it will be her turn soon, to be massacred as well [pp. 281–282, translation mine].

Cixous (1975) described a round different from the one Freud seemed to reproduce and different from the one Dora would formulate for him. This round may be close to Schnitzler's as well, but one should be cautious. According to Freud (1905a), *Herr K* said, "I can get nothing out of my wife" (p. 98, n. 1; p. 106). Cixous, however, wrote, "My wife can be nothing for me" ("Ma femme n'est rien pour moi"; p. 278). To have and to be, to have a phallus, or to be it, characterize the roles of man and woman. How does Dora encounter her murderer here, as a man or as a woman?

The female body, from which Charcot's students were mostly trying to avert their gaze, and which is a shocking presence in Shields's (2000) novel, would become in Dora's case truly invisible soon. Dora's case became known only after she had left Freud and was able to hide behind her assumed name. Years later, the physician Deutsch (1957) lifted the secret of Dora's true name and unmasked her as the daughter of the Jewish industrialist Philipp Bauer, who had moved to

Vienna from a smaller Bohemian town and was a close neighbor of Freud (see Decker, 1991). Dora's real name was Ida. Bauer also had a son, the well-known socialist politician Otto Bauer, whom Ida adored. A few years after her treatment by Freud, Ida married a not very successful composer, Ernst Adler. She was very unhappy in her marriage. She and her husband converted to Catholicism in an unsuccessful attempt to gain political protection. After the German Reich's annexation of Austria, the Adlers and their only son, Kurt Herbert Adler (born 1905), emigrated to the United States. There Kurt would eventually embark on a distinguished career as an opera conductor, become one of the founding members of the San Francisco Opera, and receive honorary medals from postwar Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the new Austrian Republic.⁵ Ida, however, remained ill until the end of her life, and finally she died from colon cancer.

In her last years in Vienna, Ida Bauer had also become well-known—and by her proper name. An excellent bridge-player, she had competed throughout Austria. Her partner on these tours was Frau Zellenka, none other than Freud's *Frau K* (see Deutsch, 1957).

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⁵See *Handbuch österreichischer Autorinnen und Autoren jüdischer Herkunft 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert I–III*, ed. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Munich: Saur, 2000, I:79–80.

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