

9. Keys to Dora

JANE GALLOP

In 1976 a book was published in France, on the cover of which we read: "Portrait de Dora/de Hélène Cixous/des femmes." These three lines are repeated on the title page, but there "des femmes" is followed by an address—2 rue de la Roquette 75011 Paris—for it is the name of a publishing house linked with the woman's group called "Psychoanalysis and Politics." As the name of a press, "des femmes" appears on many books, but it seems particularly resonant on this cover, where it occasions the third occurrence of the preposition "de" (of, from). The unusual inclusion of a "de" before the author's name works to draw the heroine Dora, the author, Hélène Cixous, as well as the press's name, that is "women," into a circuit of substitution embodied in the grammatical structure of apposition. The portrait of Dora is also a portrait of Hélène Cixous is also a portrait of women (in general).

According to the dictionary, a "portrait" is a "representation of a real person." "Representation" has a theatrical as well as a visual sense, and Cixous's text is a play, a theatrical script. But "portrait" also has an interesting figurative sense. The dictionary (*Le Petit Robert*) gives the following example from Balzac: "Virginie était tout le portrait de sa mère" (emphasis mine), as we say in English, "Virginia was the (spit-

This text appears as ch. 9 of Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London: Macmillan, 1982; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

ting) image of her mother." "Portrait" itself leads us not only to representation in the visual and theatrical senses, but to re-presentation, replication, the substitutability of one woman for another.

Dora is Freud's Dora, the name Freud gives to the heroine of his "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," published in 1905. In this case history, Freud writes of Dora's complaint that she is being used as an "object of barter." Dora protests that her father has handed her over to his friend in exchange for that friend's wife. Freud does not disagree with Dora's inference but merely states that this is not a "formal agreement" between the two men but one that the men do without being conscious of it. Dora and Freud have discovered a fragment of the general structure that thirty years later Claude Lévi-Strauss will call elementary kinship structures, that is, the exchange of women between men. Lévi-Strauss' formulation of this general system of exchange is structuralism's major contribution to feminist theory.

In another book, *La jeune née*, which has become a major text of French feminist theory, Cixous writes, "I am what Dora would have been if the history of women [*histoire des femmes*] had begun."¹ The *histoire* (history, story) that intervenes is *des femmes*, taking that phrase as both objective and subjective genitive. The cover of *Portrait* imposes a double reading of the "de" in "des femmes," since it follows two opposing uses of the preposition. The history of women must also be a history by women, women making their own history. *Histoire des femmes*: a story coming from women, a story published by the press *des femmes* (what Anglophone feminists call "herstory") alters the identification between Dora and Cixous. By passing through the terms "des femmes," whose generality appropriately designates a press, that which places words in general circulation, the triple identification saves Cixous from being simply another Dora, as Dora was rather than as she "would have been."

La jeune née is comprised of three sections: the first by Catherine Clément, the second by Hélène Cixous, the third an unprepared, unedited dialogue between the two. Throughout *La jeune née* the hysteric, particularly Dora, functions as an insistent question the two women writers are asking: Is she a heroine or a victim?

At the beginning of the book, Clément declares that the role of the

hysteric is ambiguous: she both contests and conserves (p. 13). The hysteric contests inasmuch as she "undoes family ties, introduces perturbation into the orderly unfolding of daily life, stirs up magic in apparent reason" (pp. 13-14). But the hysteric's contestation is contained and co-opted, and, like any victory of the familiar, the familial over the heterogeneous and alien, this containment serves to strengthen the family. "Every hysteric ends up inuring the others to her symptoms, and the family closes up once more around her" (p. 14). The family assimilates her otherness, and like an amoeba, finds its single cell revitalized, stronger than before.

Thus upon its first appearance the question of the hysteric's role seems answered, resolved into an irresolvable but stable and determinable ambiguity. Yet as the book continues, the ambiguity defined by Clément seems not so stable, not so easy to declare and accept as such. Just as the hysteric perturbs the orderly unfolding of family life, might she not likewise disturb the position of authorial mastery in this book? This cannot be considered a failing in a book where the desirability of a masterful authorial discourse is itself called into question. But to be unseated by hysteria is not the same as to give up intentionally one's masterful position. The reasonable, forceful, clever position for the two women theorists is to assume the inevitability of ambiguity. To choose ambiguity is to choose to give up one's masterful position, is simply a ruse toward a more resilient mastery. Yet rather than assume the ambiguity, the two writers themselves become polarized as advocates of *either* the hysteric as contesting *or* the hysteric as conserving.

During a discussion of the hysteric's role, Clément says to Cixous, "Listen, you really like Dora, but as for me, she has never seemed to me to be a revolutionary heroine." To which Cixous replies, "I don't give a damn about Dora, I don't fetishize her. She is the name of a certain disturbing force which means that the little circus no longer runs" (p. 289). Cixous's testy, defensive reply, "I don't give a damn. . . . I don't fetishize her" picks up, with perhaps hysterical hypersensitivity, the implicit and personal accusation in Clément's "Listen, you really like Dora, but as for me." Clément needs to make her position clear, to distinguish herself from Cixous, to distinguish between "you"

and "me," and, more urgently, to distinguish herself from Cixous's identification with Dora.

Whereas Cixous can write, "The hysterics are my sisters" (p. 184), in the same book Clément declares, "Physically [the hysterics] are no longer . . . and if someone dresses up like one, it is a disguise. They are obsolete figures. . . . I really liked them, but they no longer exist" (p. 111). Clément writes, "I really liked them," in the past tense; whereas she later says to Cixous, "You really like Dora" in the present tense. The disagreement seems to be a struggle to keep the hysteric an "obsolete figure," to keep the hysterical identification in the past. To understand more fully this outburst—"I don't give a damn. . . . I don't fetishize her"—let us follow the argument in the pages immediately preceding this moment:

Cixous asserts, "It is very difficult to block this sort of person who leaves you no peace, who makes permanent war against you" (p. 287). War functions in Cixous's section of the book as a positive value, necessary for transformation. If the hysteric makes "permanent war," leaves "no peace," then she must be safely ensconced on the side of contestation, unambiguously nonassimilable. But to Cixous's assertion, Clément replies: "Yes, that introduces dissension, but it in no way makes anything burst; that does not *disperse* the bourgeois family, which only exists through her dissension, which only holds together in the possibility or the reality of its own disturbance, always re-closable, always re-closed" (p. 287; Clément's italics). The contesting hysteric is thus necessary to the family cell and serves a conservative function. Rather than seeing the hysteric's role as ambiguous, Clément now argues that it is only deluded, co-opted rebellion. She may appear to disturb, but the hysteric actually provides an opportunity for the family to revitalize itself through the assimilation of something outside itself. She feeds the family machine. A heroine for Cixous, Dora is only a victim for Clément.

According to Clément, the difference between those whose violence is reassimilable and those whose contestation is effective lies in the attainment of "symbolic inscription" (p. 288). The Lacanian term "symbolic" that Clément uses here is in contradistinction to the term "imaginary." Whereas the imaginary is a closed circle, the "symbolic"

opens out into a generalized exchange. Lacan takes the term "symbolic" from Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss's kinship structures belong to the symbolic order, whereas Dora's and Freud's fragment of those structures remain within the particular family as a perverse exception. Mirroring, one-to-one identification typifies the imaginary register. Following Clément's standard of "symbolic inscription," we can see that Cixous's identification with Dora is saved from the circular delusions and powerlessness of the imaginary because it passes through the third term on the cover, passes through the press *des femmes*. Once published, the scandal can no longer be contained within the family. Publication "disperses," to use the word Clément emphasizes. The circle of the family is broken; the cell walls burst.

For Clément, Dora does not pass into "symbolic inscription," and so Dora's outbursts burst nothing. According to Clément: "Raising a ruckus, causing a crisis, perturbing familial relations, that is re-closable." But Cixous responds, "And it is that very force which works in the dismantling of structures. . . . Dora broke something." Clément replies: "I don't think so" (pp. 288-89).

The disagreement turns around the question of whether something is broken or not, open or closed. In a footnote to the Dora case, Freud writes: "The question whether a woman is 'open' or 'shut' can naturally not be a matter of indifference" (*SE* 7:67n; *C* 84n.). The question of open or shut cannot be left undecided, ambiguous. Clément has articulated the question of whether a woman contests or conserves around the distinction open or shut. Although Clément begins by defining the hysteric's position as ambiguous, once it is tied to the question "open or shut," that ambiguity becomes intolerable; it must be decided. As in Freud's footnote, what is at stake is a woman's honor. Is Dora compromised or not?

Still and all, from Freud's footnote to *La jeune née*, things have changed. For Clément and Cixous, the heroine is she who has broken something. In the 1975 text, compromise attaches to the woman who is shut up, whereas in Freud's context it is the open woman whose honor is compromised. This is not a simple reversal of values: a shift in grammatical position alters the opposition in a manner more complex than reversal. In Freud's question the woman is, in either case, gram-

matically passive: she remains passively "shut" or she is "open" through an outside agent, a man. But in *La jeune née*, that which cannot be "a matter of indifference" involves a difference in the woman's grammatical position. Does she "open" the family, or is she "shut" by it? The 1975 question "open" or "shut" includes a second question, the question of woman as agent or patient. In Freud's text she can only be patient, in fact, Dr. Freud's patient. But just as the agent of the "Portrait" (de Hélène Cixous) can identify/be identified with the patient of the "Portrait" (de Dora), the advent of the "histoire des femmes," the case history of and by women, gives the woman the agency to open, allows her to do more than patiently wait for a determination of what can "naturally" not be a matter of indifference.

The distinction "open" or "shut" matters in *La jeune née*. Cixous's section is entitled "Sorties," which can be translated as "exits, outlets, escapes, holidays, outings, sallies, sorties," also "outbursts, attacks, tirades." Let us remark especially the warlike and the hysterical senses ("attack"), but in general there is a sense of exits, openings, escapes from enclosures. Also, the disagreement between Clément and Cixous is located in a published dialogue. The choice to publish a "dissension," to bring it to "symbolic inscription," is the choice to leave it open, not to try to reassimilate it, to shut it up, or to keep it within the family. Freud's open-and-shut footnote specifically refers to Dora's concern over whether a door is locked or not, which comes up in her associations to the "first dream" of the case. Freud's footnote extends the door metaphor: "The question whether a woman is 'open' or 'shut' can naturally not be a matter of indifference. It is well known, too, what sort of 'key' effects the opening in such a case." Cixous has Freud speak these two sentences to Dora in the play. Dora says, "When I wanted . . . to close myself in to rest, no more key! I am sure it was Mr. K. who had taken it away." Freud then pronounces the two sentences, to which Dora replies, "I was 'sure' you would say that!" (pp. 48-49). The two "sure's"—the second one in quotation marks, apparently a quote from the first one—connect Dora's certainty about Herr K.'s culpable intentions and her certainty about Freud, bringing out her substitution of Freud for Herr K. in the transference.

Later in his text on Dora, Freud writes, "Sexuality is the key to the

problem of the psychoneuroses and of the neuroses in general. No one who disdains the key will ever be able to unlock the door" (SE 7:115; C 136). That the "well-known," "natural" sexual imagery of the footnote should recur in Freud's discussion of his own enterprise seems to bear out Dora's suspicion that Freud is somehow in the position of Herr K. Both hold the key and are threatening to unlock the door.

Portrait's framing of the footnote sentences with Dora's two "sure's" also brings out the smug certitude of Freud's "naturally" and his "well-known." Is this not the worst sort of vulgar, predictable "Freudian" interpretation? The predictability of Freud's line about keys offends Dora by denying the specificity of her signifiers (by not attending to her but merely applying general formulas) in the same way that she is offended by Herr K.'s beginning his declaration of love with what she knew were the same words he had used to seduce a governess. What woman wants to be opened by a skeleton key?

Cixous says of the case of Dora, "I immediately operated a reading that was probably not centered as Freud wanted it to be. . . . I read it as a fiction" (*La jeune née*, p. 272). Freud begins the case history with instructions as to how it ought to be read. It ought to be read scientifically; but even as he writes it, he is aware there will be those readers who pervert (Cixous would say "decenter") his intentions, who read it for pleasure. From Freud's Preface to the Dora case: "I am aware that—in this city, at least—there are many physicians who (revolting though it may seem) choose to read a case history of this kind not as a contribution to the psychopathology of neuroses, but as a *roman à clef* designed for their private delectation" (SE 7:9; C 23). The English translation borrows a French expression to render Freud's "*Schlüsselroman*," literally, "key-novel." The vulgar, perverse reading Freud fears would entail looking for "keys" in his text, as one would in a novel (Cixous's "fiction").

Somehow the base, the vulgar in the Dora case is connected three times to "keys": (1) the vulgar, "revolting" reading looks for keys (SE 7:9; C 23); (2) Freud's footnote refers to the "well-known" symbolism of keys (SE 7:67; C 84), thus himself giving a common, vulgar interpretation; and (3) finally, we are told in the Postface that "sexuality is the

key" (SE 7:115; C 136). Freud knows that many will "disdain" this key, that is, find it "revolting," vulgar, below them. Is not his disgust at his vulgar readers, who read for their own "delectation," a similar gesture of contempt for the sexual, particularly for the perverse—those components of sexuality that simply give pleasure as opposed to work for reproduction (cf. "read not as a contribution but for their delectation")? Perhaps Cixous's decentering, perverse reading of Dora as a fiction of keys recovers the "revolting," scandalous force of Freud's discovery of infantile, perverse sexuality.

It is interesting to note that the kind of reading Freud expected and dreaded from the physicians, "of this city, at least," must be represented in the English translation by a French phrase, *roman à clef*. In the eyes of the traditional English-speaking psychoanalytic community, the reading of Freud currently practiced in France is likewise inappropriate and unscientific. The French are reading Freud literarily, as if it were a novel, paying attention to the letter of his text, to such trivial details as the repeated appearance of the word *Schlüssel*. The inappropriateness of French Freud, however, seems to rejoin some original Viennese reading. The original German text did not need the French phrase. Perhaps, for those of us who read Freud in English, a French detour is necessary in order to recover the original, scandalous Viennese reading, in order not to lose the "key."

A French detour may be literally—that is, *à la lettre*—necessary. The English translator chooses to use the French *détour* rather than the English *detour* for the German *Umwege*, that is, chooses to include the acute accent, in the following sentence from the Dora case: "The dream, in short, is one of the *détours* by which repression can be evaded" (SE 7:15; C 29). Freud's German sentence has no italics; they originate in the English translation, as if this sentence were of particular importance to the English text, the English context. According to certain French psychoanalysts, particularly Lacan, English and American psychoanalysis has repressed the unconscious out of psychoanalysis. In that context the *détour*, the French detour, a detour through the French reading of Freud, *à la lettre*, is perhaps a means, a hope for evading repression, the repression of what is "revolting," that is, original in Freud.

There is another equally apt occasion when the English translator

finds it necessary to render Freud's German with a French phrase. Freud states that "the determination of Dora's symptoms is far too specific for it to be possible to expect a frequent recurrence of the same accidental aetiology" (SE 7:40; C 56). This assertion puts into doubt the value of publishing this case history, its value as "a contribution." "Have we not merely allowed ourselves to become the victims of a *jeu d'esprit*?" asks Freud in the English translation. The French is occasioned by the German *Spiel des Witzes*. Anglophone psychoanalysis has often dismissed the current Parisian equivalent as unserious word play, mere punning. The German word *Witz* can be construed as an allusion to *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz . . .*), published by Freud in the same year as the Dora case. The French have paid great attention to this jokebook as one of the best illustrations that what Freud discovered is an unconscious structured like a language.

Freud is here discussing the problem of the "skeleton key," the interpretation that fits many similar cases. Freud's radical discovery was the specificity expressed in every symptom. Yet the fate of psychoanalysis in the English-speaking countries, where it achieved such popularity, was to become a set system of interpretation, a ready-made symbolism to be applied to many cases, giving it an obvious market value, quieting the very doubt Freud expresses here. Again, it may be necessary to pass through the French *jeu d'esprit* in order to rediscover Freud's discovery—that symptoms are ways of speaking and, like all communications, only take meaning in a specific context.² Just as Cixous's Dora refuses the substitutability of all women, psychoanalysis (and feminism) must refuse the substitutability of all cases, the "well-known sort of key" ("It is *well known* what sort of 'key' effects the opening in such a case").

It is not just the English translator who puts the Dora text through French detours; Freud himself interjected French phrases at certain points in his German text. The most remarkable one, one that Cixous writes into her play (p. 36), is the sentence "J'appelle un chat un chat" (literally, "I call a cat a cat"; compare the English "call a spade a spade"). The context is once again the question of scandal, here specifically that the reader might be scandalized that a psychoanalyst should

discuss sexual practices, especially perverse sexual practices (in this case, oral intercourse) with an inexperienced girl.

Freud writes, "A gynaecologist, after all, under the same conditions, does not hesitate to *make them submit to uncovering every possible part of their body*. The best way of speaking about such things is to *be dry and direct*" (my italics). Freud concludes his argument thus: "I call bodily organs and processes by their technical names, and I tell these to the patient if they—the names, I mean—happen to be unknown to her. *J'appelle un chat un chat*" (SE 7:48; C 65). At the very moment he defines nonprurient language as direct and noneuphemistic, he takes a French detour into a figurative expression. By his terms, this French sentence would seem to be titillating, coy, flirtatious. And to make matters more juicy (less "dry"), *chat* or *chatte* can be used as vulgar (vulvar) slang for the female genitalia. So in this gynecological context, where he founds his innocence upon the direct use of technical terms, he takes a French detour and calls a pussy a pussy.³

Freud's defensive interjection, "the names, I mean," leads us back to a passage where he writes that he "took the greatest pains with this patient not to introduce her to any fresh facts in the region of sexual knowledge. . . . I did not call a thing by its name until her allusions to it had become so unambiguous that there seemed slight risk in translating them into direct speech." (SE 7:31; C 46). Freud restricts his activities to translation from allusive to "direct speech." But as we have seen, "direct speech" leads to "j'appelle un chat un chat," that is, translation from German into French, from scientific into figurative language, from original expression into cliché. The innocent activity Freud calls "translation" seems to relate to some kind of suspicious detour that allows repression to be evaded.

The passage continues: "Her answer was always prompt and *frank* she knew about it already. But the question of where her knowledge came from was a riddle which her memories were unable to solve." Freud is *not* the author of her knowledge (merely the translator), but who is? As translator of an anonymous text, his responsibility (or lack of it) is more ambiguous. The "riddle" is not solved until it is too late, until a footnote to the Postface, where Freud writes, "I ought to have guessed that the main source of her knowledge of sexual matters *could*

have been no one but Frau K. . . . I ought to have attacked this riddle and looked for the motive of *such an extraordinary piece of repression*" (SE 7:120 n.; C 142 n.; my italics). Why did Freud fail to do what he "ought to have"? Why did he not attack the riddle?

In *Portrait de Dora*, Freud's line "*J'appelle un chat un chat*" is spoken by Frau K. (p. 36). This sets up an identification between the "author" of Dora's sexual knowledge and its "translator." Is Freud afraid of solving the riddle because, like Oedipus, he will find himself to be the guilty party?

In a way, yes. But not because of any direct identification with Frau K. Before he finally solves the riddle, Freud arrives at a preliminary solution. "For some time," Freud writes in a footnote, "I looked upon [Dora's governess] as the source of all Dora's secret knowledge, and perhaps I was not entirely wrong in this" (SE 7:36 n.; C 52n.). It is precisely in the position of the governess, of the servant, that Dora places Freud.

When Dora announces that they are in their last session, Freud asks her when she decided to terminate the analysis. To her response, "a fortnight ago," Freud replies, "That sounds just like a maidservant or a governess—a fortnight's warning." Is the servant giving two weeks' notice before quitting, or is the master giving the servant two weeks' notice before letting her go? In other words, is Dora or Freud in the role of the governess? Cixous's play gives a double reading to this, leaving the distribution of roles ambiguous. In the play, Freud says: "A fortnight? That's the notice a governess gives of her departure" (p. 98). In this reading the departing one, Dora, is the governess. But, in response to Dora's complaint that the cure is lasting too long, Freud says: "You still need a helper for several months"; Dora replies, "I don't need a governess" (p. 82). Perhaps the only respect in which this ambiguity can be decided is economic. Freud is being paid by Dora's family; he is the servant whose services are no longer required. I certainly do not wish to deny the Dora-governess identification, but merely to emphasize what is *not* analyzed in Freud's text.

As Cixous points out, there are two governesses in Dora's story, and both suffer the same fate—seduced and abandoned by the master (*La jeune née*, p. 276). When Freud makes the governess connection in

Dora's last session, she recalls the K.'s governess, who had been seduced by Herr K. with the same words he then tried to use on Dora. When Dora transfers her relation to Herr K. onto Freud, she refuses to be dismissed as the governess was. Her revenge is to switch roles and put Herr K./Freud into the place of the servant and dismiss him.

The identification between Freud and the governess does not result merely from Dora's revenge reversal. Dora told how *her* governess appeared to be interested in Dora until Dora realized the governess was really just interested in Dora's father (SE 7:37; C 53). Octave Mannoni, in his *Fictions freudiennes*, has Dora write a letter to Frau K. in which she says that Freud, likewise, "was not really interested in me, but only in pleasing papa" (p. 15). If it is the case that Freud is using Dora to get to her father—that, as Mannoni has Dora say, Freud is "in love with papa" (p. 15)—then it is ironic that Freud should suffer the same fate as the governess, to be rejected by Dora's father. Freud writes at the end of the case history,

It must be confessed that Dora's father was never entirely straightforward. He had given his support to the treatment so long as he could hope that I should "talk" Dora out of her belief that there was something more than a friendship between him and Frau K. His interest faded when he observed that it was not my intention to bring about that result." (SE 7:109; C 131; my italics)

"It must be confessed" suggests that there is some shame attached to this for Freud. He has been taken in, believing in this man's "interest" and "support," and then discovering he was merely being used.

Identification between Freud and a governess, maid, or nurse is not restricted to the confines of the Dora case but has a decisive, structural relation to psychoanalysis in general. Psychoanalysis—Freud was discovering at the time of the Dora case but not "in time"—works because of the transference, because the patient transfers previous relations with others onto the psychoanalyst, reactivates the emotions, and can work them out in analysis. Later Freud will theorize that all relations to others merely repeat the child's original relation to the mother, the first other. Transference is not peculiar to psychoanalysis but is actually the structure of all love. Even the relation to the father, Freud discovered, is already actually a transference of mother-love onto the

father. What distinguishes psychoanalysis from other relations is the possibility of analyzing the transference, of being aware of the emotions as a repetition, as inappropriate to context. Whereas in other relationships both parties have an investment in seeing love not as a repetition but as unique and particular to the person loved, in psychoanalysis the analyst will want to point out the structure of repetition. What facilitates the recognition of the feeling as transference, as an inappropriate repetition, is the fact that the analyst is paid. The money proves that the analyst is only a stand-in. Rather than having the power of life and death like the mother has over the infant, the analyst is financially dependent on the patient. But, in that case, the original "analyst," the earliest person paid to replace the mother, is that frequent character in Freud's histories, the nursemaid/governess.

And she is, as both Clément and Cixous agreed, the ultimate seductress (p. 276). Just as the Dora case poses for Freud the "riddle" of the source of Dora's sexual knowledge, hysteria in general poses the enigma of a seduction, that is, likewise, an initiation into carnal knowledge. In the first section of *La jeune née* ("La Coupable"—The Guilty Woman), Clément traces Freud's search for the guilty one, his search for the seducer. Freud begins with the discovery that hysterics were seduced by their fathers. But unable to accept the possibility of so many perverse fathers, he presses on to the discovery of infantile, polymorphous perverse sexuality. Not fathers but children are perverse: they fantasize seduction by the father. But his detective work does not stop there. Perhaps because he is a father and was a child, he goes on to locate the guilt where it will not besmirch him. He will escape Oedipus' fate, and his search for the original sin will end up exculpating him as father/child. In the 1933 lecture "Femininity" he writes: "And now we find the phantasy of seduction once more in the pre-Oedipus . . . but the seducer is regularly the mother. Here, however, the phantasy touches the ground of reality, for it was really the mother who by her activities over the child's bodily hygiene inevitably stimulated, and perhaps even roused for the first time, pleasurable sensations in her genitals" (SE 22:120). Whereas the fantasy of the father's seduction is mere fantasy, the mother's seduction "touches the ground of reality." This "ground of reality," the mother's actual role in child

raising, assures that there is no realistic ground for identification between Freud and the mother. The riddle is solved: the mother is "the source" of sexuality, of perversion, of neurosis. The detective work is completed.

Or it would be completed if the family were truly a closed circuit. One of psychoanalysis's consistent errors is to reduce everything to a family paradigm. Sociopolitical questions are always brought back to the model father-mother-child. Class conflict and revolution are understood as a repetition of parent-child relations. This has always been the pernicious apoliticism of psychoanalysis. It has also been hard to argue against without totally rejecting psychoanalysis, since it is based upon the fundamental notion that everything we do as adults must repeat some infantile wish, and for most of us, the infantile world was the family. What is necessary to get beyond this dilemma is a recognition that the closed, cellular model of the family used in such psychoanalytic thinking is an idealization, a secondary revision of the family. The family never was, in any of Freud's texts, completely closed off from questions of economic class. And the most insistent locus of that intrusion into the family circle (intrusion of the symbolic into the imaginary) is the maid/governess/nurse. As Cixous says, "She is the hole in the social cell."⁴

The search for the seducer is not complete when it has interrogated all the family members: father-child-mother. "Femininity," the text quoted earlier, in which Freud declares the mother's seduction as grounded in reality, might be considered a secondary revision of an earlier text, "Female Sexuality." In this earlier text we read: "The part played in starting [phallic activity] by nursery hygiene is reflected in the very common phantasy which makes the mother or nurse into a seducer. . . . Actual seduction, too, is common enough; it is initiated either by other children or someone in charge of the child [nursemaid]—who wants to soothe it, or send it to sleep or make it dependent on them" (SE 21:232).

It has become a commonplace of the history of psychoanalysis to mark as a turning point the moment in the 1890s when Freud stopped believing in a "real" seduction at the origin of hysteria and realized that the source of neurosis is the child's fantasies. This is the monu-

mental break with theories of traumatic etiology and the discovery of infantile sexuality. But here, in a 1931 text, Freud is talking about "actual seduction." The father cannot be a seducer; that would undercut his upright position as patriarch. Even the mother only seduces unwittingly in the execution of her proper duties. The "actual seduction," intentional seduction, can only be the act of another child (children, not parents, are perverse) or a nurse. The servant, member of a lower class, like a child, is capable of perversion.

The discovery of the universal fantasy of seduction by the father is Freud's discovery of the Oedipus complex. From that, via *Totem and Taboo*, we reach an incest taboo that, formulated by Lévi-Strauss, will found society by keeping sexual relations outside the family circle. If sexual relations are understood as some kind of contact with alterity (although generally there is some ritual homogenization of that alterity), then the incest taboo would institute a prohibition against alterity within the family circle, a law ensuring the "imaginary" closure of the cell. In that case, the "nurse"—not only outside the family but outside the economic class—would constitute the greatest threat to the law homogenizing the family. Lévi-Strauss finds that the correlate to the incest taboo is endogamy. Sexual relations are with someone whose alterity is limited within the confines of a larger circle. Exogamy, marrying outside the larger circle, is equally a violation of the incest taboo. Marriage outside of class or race might represent a contact with a nonassimilable alterity, thus like actual incest bringing unmitigated heterogeneity within the family circle. Freud's nurses and governesses might represent just such otherness, the very otherness that can also be represented by the violence of class conflict. Yet she is there at the heart of the family, in the cell nucleus. She is so much part of the family that the child's fantasies (the unconscious) do not distinguish "mother or nurse."

The question Clément asked about the hysteric must be asked about the governess. Does she contest or conserve? Is she a heroine or a victim? Is she a hole in the cell (as Cixous says), or does the cell close up around her again? "Open" or "shut" cannot be a matter of indifference. Of course, the answer is that her role is ambiguous. ("I was 'sure' you would say that.") The determining question is one of sym-

bolic inscription. The apolitical psychoanalytic thinking that has traditionally reduced economic questions to "family matters" is simply an avatar of familial thinking. The familial imaginary wants to preserve the infantile fantasmatic confusion between mother and nurse. If the nurse is assimilated to the mother (if the transference goes unquestioned), then the family cell can close up again.

Psychoanalysis can and ought to be the place of symbolic inscription of the governess. The absolute importance of the economic transaction between patient and analyst has been repeatedly stressed by analytic theory. Despite this, there is a strong temptation to be the Mother (the phallic mother, Lacan's Other, the subject presumed to know, the Doctor) rather than the nurse. Freud, for example, used to raise money to support the Wolf Man, after the latter was impoverished. The Wolf Man is the classic case of a patient who never resolved the transference, who remained "Freud's Wolf Man" for the rest of his life. How can the transference be analyzed if the economic rupture of the imaginary is sutured, the financial distinction between governess and mother effaced? For psychoanalysis to be a locus of radical contestation, Freud must assume his identification with the governess.

Cixous says in *La jeune née*, "The truth is that, in the system of exchange, me in your place and you in my place, . . . Freud in relation to Dora occupied the maid's place. It is Freud who was the maid, and that is what is intolerable for Freud in the Dora case, it's to have been treated like maids are treated: to have been thrown out like maids were thrown out" (p. 280). The vulgar, idiomatic expression Cixous uses for "thrown out" is "*foutu à la porte*." *Foutre*, which no longer has a literal sense, used to mean "fuck." What Freud could not tolerate was to "have been *foutu à la porte* (fucked at the door) like maids were fucked at the door." I take leave for this vulgar, literal reading from Cixous's emphasis on the door feature in Dora (*Porte-trait de Door-a*), which keeps the door in this commonplace idiom from facing into a figurative background. Once the door is noticed, "*foutre*" is unavoidable. The maid is "fucked at the door." She is "at the door" inasmuch as she is a threshold figure: existing between "within the family" and "outside the family." Fucking her is a threshold act, somewhere between incest and exogamy, participating in both, embracing the out-

side, all the while attempting to assimilate it. If "open" or "shut" is not a matter of indifference, as Freud would have it, then "*foutre*" always takes place "at the door." It is not just the maid, but in Freud's "well-known" symbolism, women in general who are "*foutues à la porte*."

As Cixous points out, the Dora case is punctuated by women being declared "nothing" (*La jeune née*, p. 281). Both Herr K. and Dora's father say that of their wives.⁵ What is true of the wives (mothers) is even more explicit for the two governesses. Dora "sees a massacre of women executed to make space for her. But she knows that she will in turn be massacred" (p. 282). Neither Dora, the hysteric, nor Freud, the governess, can tolerate the position allotted them by the system of exchanges. Neither Dora nor Freud can tolerate identification with the seduced and abandoned governess.

As a threatening representative of the symbolic, the economic, the extrafamilial, the maid must be both seduced (assimilated) and abandoned (expelled). She must be "*foutue à la porte*." The nurse is desirable; her alterity is a stimulus, a tension, a disturbing itch in the composure of the family. But the desire for her is murderous. Sexual seduction (ritual homogenizing assimilation) is not sufficient to reduce the stimulus tension. Her alterity is not just her femininity, not even just her not belonging to the family, it is her not belonging to the same economic class. It is not enough to seduce her; she must be expelled from the family.

Dora and Freud cannot bear to identify with the governess because they think there is still some place where one can escape the structural exchange of women. They still believe that there is some mother who is not a governess. Both Dora and Freud dismiss Dora's mother; she is obviously not the phallic mother. But Dora refuses to blame or resent Frau K., refuses to see the similarity between Frau K. and the governess, who was using Dora to please Dora's father. Her love for Frau K.—the adoration of her that is brought out by Cixous's play, as well as Lacan's reading of the Dora case⁶—is a belief in her phallic uniqueness, her nonsubstitutability. That she should be compared to the Madonna (by Lacan and Cixous) is instructive in this regard.

Freud's and Dora's understanding of the "barter" of women never passes through the general term "des femmes," always remains in the

imaginary. The imaginary might be characterized as the realm of non-assumption of the mother's castration. In the imaginary, the "mother," unlike the maid, is assumed to be still phallic; omnipotent and omniscient, she is unique. What shows in the Dora case that neither Dora nor Freud wanted to see is that Frau K. and Dora's mother are in the same position as the maid. In feminist or symbolic or economic terms the mother/wife is in a position of substitutability and economic inferiority. For the analysis to pass out of the imaginary, it must pass through a symbolic third term—like "des femmes" on the cover of Cixous's *Portrait de Dora*, a term that represents a class.

Having reached a definite conclusion, I find more remains to be said. The "more" revolves around Dora's love for Frau K., around her lesbianism. This supplementary postscript would repeat Freud's gesture of emphasizing Dora's homosexual love in a footnote to his conclusion.

What has been said of that love in the present text is that Dora sees Frau K. as the phallic mother, infallible, nonsubstitutable. My argument has subordinated this homosexual love to the important psychoanalytic and feminist question of the relation between transference and radical contestation. Dora's love for Frau K. has been cited here as an instance of the imaginary, which is to be taken as a criticism. But the "more" I have to say is about the beauty, the eroticism, the affirmative quality of that love, a side brought out particularly by Cixous's *Portrait*. And somehow beauty and affirmation, sexuality as pleasure and joy rather than as murderous assimilation, seem to find their place only as a supplement to the political, theoretical argument.

This afterthought also repeats a gesture Cixous makes in the dialogue at the end of *La jeune née*. She says that Dora "saw the ignominy and the staging of the murder of woman. One should add to that what there is in Dora of a very beautiful, staggering, feminine homosexuality, what there is of love of woman" (p. 282; my italics). The first sentence quoted here is the climax of Cixous's argument that Dora saw and refused the "massacre" involved in the "barter" of woman. This is the political analysis that constitutes Cixous' reading of the Dora case. But rather than conclude there, Cixous feels the need of something more, so she continues mid-paragraph: "One should add to that." Perhaps in

a theoretical text one can never do more than say "There is more, there is love and beauty," which is a necessary affirmative supplement to the murderous negation that theory must be. But in *Portrait de Dora*, in the theatrical text, in the fiction, this is not a problem; the affirmative is interwoven in various patterns with the negative.⁷

The argument I conclude above, before this postscript, accepts Clément's valuation of symbolic inscription. The symbolic is politically healthy; the imaginary is regressive. That is a classic Lacanian ethical hierarchy. But like all hierarchies, it can be oppressive. One of the effects of this hierarchy, of all hierarchies (Cixous suggests, pp. 115–117), is to support the valuation of men over women. The symbolic is linked to the Law of the Father, to the Phallus, whereas the imaginary is linked to the relation to the Mother. There have been some thinkers who have questioned this valuation of the symbolic at the expense of the imaginary. Two of the most eloquent in their questioning are Jean Laplanche and Michèle Montrelay.⁸ Both argue that Lacanian analysts have been so preoccupied with denouncing the ego and thus the imaginary (for the ego is the agency of the imaginary), that they have overlooked the positive and necessary function of the imaginary. Lacanian theory views the imaginary as a "pure effect of the symbolic," but it might also be said that the imaginary is necessary to give "consistency" to the symbolic (Montrelay), to "embody" it (Laplanche). Since the imaginary embodies, fleshes out the skeletal symbolic, it is possible to see the Lacanian devaluation of the imaginary as related to a hatred of the flesh, of woman and of pleasure.

Clément denies her love for the hysterics—"I really liked them, but they no longer exist"—whereas she accuses Cixous of really liking Dora. Clément has passed into the symbolic and wants to keep this love safely behind her, in the past tense, does not want to regress into the imaginary. Dora's love for Frau K. is marked in Freud's text by Dora's phrase "her adorable white body" (p. 61). In Cixous's play Dora describes this body as "pearly" (p. 34). Yet Clément, in her section of *La jeune née*, calls Dora "the pearl of the hysterics" (p. 96). It is not that Clément does not love Dora but that she wants to deny that love, the beauty of the pearl, wants to be firmly ensconced in the symbolic, with no ambiguity.

It cannot be a question here of choosing Clément's symbolic or Cixous's imaginary. Indeed, the fact that the two are bound together into one book frustrates traditional notions of opposition. Like the hysteric's role, like the governess's role, we must learn to accept the ambiguity, learn to make "open or shut" a matter of indifference. Both Clément and Cixous use the word "bisexual" in their texts in *La jeune née* to name some sort of positive goal. Bisexuality has traditionally been linked with hysteria in psychoanalytic theory. But these women writers are talking about an "other bisexuality." Neither the fantasmatic resolution of differences in the imaginary, nor the fleshless, joyless assumption of the fact of one's lack of unity in the symbolic, but an other bisexuality, one that pursues, loves, and accepts both the imaginary and the symbolic, both theory and flesh.

Notes

1. Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, *La jeune née* (Paris: 10/18, 1975), p. 184.

2. There is one other example in the Dora case where the English translation uses a French phrase to render Freud's German: "And if the connection between the symptomatic expression and the unconscious mental content should strike us as being in this case a clever *tour de force*, we shall be glad to hear it succeeds in creating the same impression in every other case and in every other instance." Again what Freud is discussing here is the scandalous discovery that the unconscious speaks. The French work which insists on his discovery might be suspected by Anglophones as a "clever *tour de force*," that is artful and far-fetched rather than serious and scientific.

3. In the next paragraph Freud uses another French expression—*pour faire une omelette il faut casser des oeufs* (you have to break eggs to make an omelette)—still in the context of his defense of sexual conversation with his hysterics. Yet even this culinary commonplace can take on a sexual meaning. Lacan, in "Position de l'inconscient" (*Écrits*), rewrites "omelette" into its near homonym "hommelette"—homunculus or little man. One could, following that lead, read the proverb as meaning "you have to break eggs (penetrate and fertilize ova) to make a little man (a baby)."

4. *La jeune née*, p. 276. There is a nurse in Freud's own infancy who plays an important role and is connected to "cases" and being "locked up." She was expelled from the house and locked up for theft. See Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, vol. 1 (New York: Basic Books, 1953). For some excellent work on the import of Freud's nurse, see Jim Swan, "Mater and Nannie," *American Imago* (Spring 1974), vol. 31, no. 1.

5. Actually, in the English translation they say, "I get nothing out of my wife," whereas Cixous has them say in French, "My wife is nothing for me." Probably the most literal translation of the German—*Ich habe nichts an meiner Frau*—would be, "I have nothing in my wife." What seems to work, regardless of the language, is an insistent association between "wife" and "nothing."

6. See Lacan's excellent and unusually clear "Intervention sur le transfert," in *Ecrits* (essay 4 in this book).

7. But must we accept this inevitable division? Cannot a theoretical text also be theatrical? "Theatre" and "theory" both stem from the same root—"thea." In fact, is theory not always theatrical, a rhetorical performance as well as a quest for truth? The limits of theory remain to be tested.

8. Michèle Montrelay, *L'ombre et le nom*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), pp. 155-156. Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Jeffrey Mehlman, tr. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 125-126.

10. Dora's Secrets, Freud's Techniques

NEIL HERTZ

WHAT DORA KNEW

Imagine an older man intrigued by the following story: a young girl is drawn—perhaps in all innocence, perhaps in frightened or even fascinated complicity—into an adult, adulterous sexual tangle involving her father and an Other Woman, a woman she had come to trust. How would this play itself out, how would the daughter's observations and principles make themselves felt? How would she bear the burden of her knowledge? What would that knowledge do to her? Add to this set of questions another set, of equal interest to the older man: How can this story be told? Who can tell it? Can the daughter tell it unaided? Or must her account be supplemented and revised by a more informed, a more articulate, adult consciousness? And if it is so supplemented, how can the adult be sure he is getting the story straight, setting it down in unadulterated form? That is, how can he be sure that his telling of the story isn't itself a further violation of the young girl's particular integrity?

I have been paraphrasing bits of Henry James' Preface to *What Maisie*

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