

# Dora:

## Freud's Pygmalion or the Unrecovered Patient of a Famous Analyst?



Imre Szecssödy

On Freud's Couch

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Imre Szecsödy

Ida Bauer, an 18-year-old woman, still a girl, was seriously involved in a complicated relation between her father and his mistress, Frau K, a tangled web of relations between adult men and women. The situation both frightened and fascinated Dora, as Freud was to call her in his case history.<sup>1</sup> She is brought to Freud by her father, who appeals to Freud to try and bring her to reason. With this as a starting point, what position is she to take in the consulting room? How can the daughter's observations be of use?

What can she make of her experiences? How can her history be told? Who will be able to tell it? Can she do it without help from adults? How is one to get at the truth? What is the truth? Whose truth is the truth? Will Freud be able to search for it with her? Can we do that? Can anyone?

Many have accused Freud of having used Dora as his Pygmalion, on the one hand, to serve as a demonstration to the world of the central place occupied in therapy by the interpretation of dreams, and on the other, to be used as proof of the unique place of sexuality in the understanding of the origin of neurosis. Many others, especially female researchers, have asserted that Freud exploited Dora (Bernheimer and Kahane 1985, Hertz 1985, Moi 1985, Ramas 1985, Thompson 1990). He encroached on her

soul, constructing her “story” out of his own need and preconceived ideas. Even the choice of the pseudonym “Dora” suggests Freud’s problematic attitude. Freud’s sister, Rosa, had a servant also named Rosa and in order to avoid confusion she rechristened her Dora.

“When Freud found out about this he exclaimed, ‘Poor things! They can’t even keep their own names!’ The following day he is looking for a pseudonym for Ida Bauer. ‘Dora’ pops up spontaneously; only after second thoughts does he remember the events of yesterday at his sister’s. Compassion? Contempt? Ida as the servant girl of psychoanalysis? Or all those things?” Lars Sjögren asks in his book about Freud (1989, p. 94).

Freud emphasized that the practical goal of treatment is to cure all the damage to the patient's memory and that when a successful conclusion has been reached it will be possible for the patient to *own his history*. Psychoanalysis is

a final act of self-appropriation, the appropriation by oneself of one's own history. This is in part so, because one's story is in so large a measure a phenomenon of language, as psychoanalysis is, in turn, a demonstration of the degree to which language can go in the reading of all our experience. What we end up with, then, is a fictional construction that is at the same time satisfactory to us in the form of the truth and as the form of the truth. [Marcus 1985, p. 72]

In what follows I try to reflect how Freud has presented Dora's story, how he has made her

incomplete history, “a fragment of an analysis,” into the history of psychoanalysis and has made her story into a story of the central role of childhood sexuality in the origin of the hysterical neurosis and into a story of the significance of dreams in the work of analysis.

To a great extent my reflection will be a grid on which I choose and partly distort the case history in line with my own assessments and experiences. I will, however, retain the possibility of letting Freud—at least partly—own his history. I have therefore chosen to use his own text, using long quotations from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. The turn-of-the-century year, 1900, the year that ended the nineteenth century and opened the twentieth, when Freud met Dora and made his notes in

preparation for “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,” has left its stamp on the text, on what is said, heard, and noted. As an introduction, therefore, I wish to ease the reader’s meeting with Dora and Freud with the help of a number of illuminating quotations.

## **Background**

The 18-year-old Dora broke off her psychoanalytic treatment with Sigmund Freud on December 31, 1900. At the turn of the century there was in Vienna a

distinctive, creative ambience in the split between old and new, between an apocalyptic sense of doom as the century drew to a close, *fin de siècle*, and the bright transitional optimism which was also a hallmark of the times—in the glow of nostalgia also called *la belle époque*, the beautiful time. It was in this field of high tension between the authority and rhetoric

of the old Hapsburg empire on the one hand and subversive, revolutionary movements and ideas on the other that Freud's work evolved. ... The emperor was no longer the master in his own house but was compulsively, neurotically occupied with taking personal charge of inspecting his kingdom and its finances; the empress, neurotic, too, visibly anorexic with narcissistic traits, travelled continually; the son Rudolf, the crown prince, committed suicide, staged as the finale of intercourse where the consenting partner was also put to death. [Hallerstedt 1990, p. 9]

In 1891 the Baroness Helena Vetsera wrote her memoirs, confiscated by the police, in which she recorded her motherly love as well as her passion for respectability. Her daughter, 18-year-old Maria, fell in love with the Archduke Rudolf of Habsburg, "from a distance but with all the ardor of a defenceless being in need of an idol to surrender to and sacrifice for whole-heartedly, of

someone to admire in order to fill her life with poetry and give meaning to her still undefined existence, which seemed to be slipping by in idle, indefinable melancholy. The Archduke had just turned thirty. He was renowned for his liberal ideas, demonstratively reckless dissipation, and unbridled impulsiveness” (Magris 1989, p. 167). Maria met him at the race track and “confided to her maid that Rudolf had noticed her. They had several secret meetings which after a few weeks ended in the infamous Mayerling drama where they were both found dead. The emperor was informed of the death by Katharina Schratt, the friend who by her calm, discreet affection consoled him for Empress Elizabeth’s emotional imbalance” (Magris 1989).

Freud's consulting room and residence on Berggasse was close to the University and the imposing Ring, a magnificent street lined with palaces, museums, operas and theaters, castles, and the Parliament building. "This crumbling feudal-aristocratic order and growing anti-Semitism together with the rational law of the new science, its products of glittering gold as well as its waste products— poverty and child labor, slums and periodic unemployment—made up the soil which became a breeding ground for fresh approaches and creativity, particularly in the world of science and art" (Hallerstedt 1990, p. 9). Max Winter, a somewhat older friend of Dora's brother, a leading Social Democrat, journalist, and social critic, wrote at the turn of the century:

In the Viennese quarter Landstrasse, 7 minutes by streetcar from Ringen, there is an apartment house. It has 216 apartments and a total of more than a thousand inhabitants. About 300 school children live there. Although its tenants are distributed over four floors, it has only a single faucet and its hygienic facility consists, or at least it did a few years ago, of its own morgue to which the dead have to be removed. Every tenant has only one room. For him and his family this is where he is born and dies; it is his kitchen, dining room, workroom, bedroom; for the children it is a playhouse, sick room, classroom, in brief their whole world. Every room is about two-and-one half meters wide, five meters long, and three meters high. No ray of sunshine ever finds its way into one third of the rooms, more than half of all those on the first and second floors. The house with the thousand people—it is called the Beehive—long ago murdered twenty-five children; it is still killing. Year after year the house has yielded 36,000 Kronen net; this profit seems to justify child murder as well as

matricide and patricide. [Hjorth 1984, p. 105]

In the Imperial and Royal Monarchy there were

incessant internal conflicts between various forces, conflicts which may be threatening and anxiety producing and in which language becomes an instrument not only for expression but also for repression. ... In Frans Josef s empire this veiled rhetoric had developed to such an extent that as an ingredient in his daily environment it must have been a challenge to the truth-seeking Freud with his penetrating insight. At every turn he was surrounded by the pattern of ambiguity present in the discourse everywhere in society, all of which contributed to the development of his interest in research. ... [But] Freud was the recipient not only of the doubtful benefit of growing up in a society with unusually garish facades. He lived in an environment that obviously was also favorably disposed to genius. [Sjögren 1989, p. 24-25]

## **Presentation of Dora**

Dora, or Ida Bauer as she was really called, was born in Vienna on November 1, 1881. Her emancipated Jewish family could—like Freud’s—be traced back to Bohemia. The father, Philip Bauer, was a wealthy textile manufacturer, “a man of rather unusual activity and talents” (Freud 1905b, p. 18), in comfortable circumstances, the owner of a large factory. He also owned factories in Nachod and Warnsdorf (in Bohemia) and in Reichenberg (in Austria). The family had lived in the latter town for a time before they moved to Vienna at the turn of the century. Ludwig, a respected lawyer in Vienna, was referred to as the father’s eldest brother by Rogow (1978), but he may have been the father’s brother-in-law since Freud writes about the father’s elder “sister”:

I had in the meantime also made the acquaintance in Vienna of a sister of his, who was a little older than himself. She gave clear evidence of a severe form of psychoneurosis without any characteristically hysterical symptoms. After a life which had been weighed down by an unhappy marriage, she died of a marasmus which made rapid advances and the symptoms of which were, as a matter of fact, never fully cleared up. [Freud 1905b, p. 19]

Dora had “since she had fallen ill taken as her model the aunt who has just been mentioned.” The younger brother, Karl, was a business man Freud describes as a “hypochondriacal bachelor.” The men had liberal political views, and it was Karl who introduced Ida’s brother Otto to socialism.

The father’s business (he traveled a great deal) and his infirmities dominated the family’s

life to a great extent:

His daughter was most tenderly attached to him, and for that reason her critical powers, which developed early, took all the more offence at many of his actions and peculiarities. Her affection for him was still further increased by the many severe illnesses he had been through since her sixth year. At that time he had fallen ill with tuberculosis and the family had consequently moved to a small town in a good climate, situated in one of our southern provinces (Meran). There his lung trouble rapidly improved; but on account of the precautions which were still considered necessary, both parents and children continued for the next ten years or so to reside chiefly in this spot, which I shall call B. During the hottest part of the summer the family used to move to a health resort (L) in the hills. When the girl was about 10 years old, her father had to go through a course of treatment in a darkened room on account of a detached retina. His gravest illness occurred some two years later. It took the form of a confusional attack,

followed by symptoms of paralysis and slight mental disturbances. He had been advised to consult me in Vienna. I hesitated for some time as to whether I ought to regard the case as one of tabo-paralysis, but I finally decided upon a diagnosis of a diffuse vascular affection; and since the patient admitted having had a specific infection before his marriage, I prescribed an energetic course of anti-luetic treatment, as a result of which all the remaining disturbances passed off. It is no doubt owing to this fortunate intervention of mine that four years later he brought his daughter, who had meanwhile grown unmistakably neurotic, and introduced her to me, and that after another two years he handed her over to me for psychotherapeutic treatment. [Freud 1905b, p. 19]

The father died of his tuberculosis on July 3, 1913.

Her mother, Käthe Gerber Bauer was

an uncultivated woman and above all 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 "housewife's psychosis." She had no understanding of her children's more active interests, and was occupied all day long in cleaning the house with its furniture and utensils and keeping them clean—to such an extent as to make it almost impossible to use or enjoy them. The relations between the girl and her mother had been unfriendly for years. The daughter looked down on her mother and used to criticize her mercilessly, and she had withdrawn completely from her influence. [Freud 1905b, p. 20]

The mother died in a tuberculosis sanatorium on August 26, 1912.

Dora's only brother, Otto, 14 months older, was one of the leaders of the Austrian Social Democratic Party between 1918 and 1934,

becoming a prominent ideologue and theoretician for the Austro-Marxist movement. He has been described as a serious, gloomy, enigmatic, contrary person; offensive, sarcastic, and radical in both the spoken and written word but vacillating and restrained when action was required. He was compulsively rigid in his habits, worked tirelessly, was the author of six books and as a 10-year-old had written a five-act play about the fall of Napoleon. He wrote innumerable articles and habitually took part in political meetings and in the work of Parliament. He was the Austrian foreign minister from 1918-1920. One year after his mother's death he married a divorced woman with three children who was 10 years his senior. Long afterward, in 1928, he took as a mistress the beautiful, high-spirited Hilda Schiller-Marmorek, 10 years

younger than he. From 1934 on they lived together in exile in Prague. When Hitler invaded they had to flee to Paris, where Otto died that same year on July 4, 1938. The Socialist government in France gave Otto Bauer the honor of a state funeral.

As early as the age of 8, Dora showed nervous symptoms. In connection with an outing to the mountains she had an attack of shortness of breath (dyspnoea), which became chronic and was at times quite severe. She had the usual children's diseases—"her brother was as a rule the first to start the illness and used to have it very slightly, and she would then follow suit with a severe form of it" (Freud 1905b, p. 22). When she was 12, she began to suffer from migraine-like unilateral headaches and attacks of nervous coughing. The headaches grew rarer by

the time she was 16, but the coughing fits continued. When, as an 18-year-old, she came to Freud for treatment she was again coughing in a characteristic manner. Early on she had learned to make fun of the efforts of her doctors and had finally renounced medical help altogether. She had independent views and every proposal that she should consult a new doctor aroused her resistance so that “it was only her father’s authority which induced her to come to me at all,” Freud wrote. Dora had grown into

a girl in the first bloom of youth with intelligent and engaging looks. But she was a source of heavy trials for her parents. Low spirits and an alteration in her character had now become the main features of her illness. She was clearly satisfied neither with herself nor with her family; her attitude toward her father was unfriendly and she was on very bad terms with her mother, who was bent upon

drawing her into taking a share in the work of the house. She tried to avoid social intercourse and employed herself— so far as she was allowed to by the fatigue and lack of concentration of which she complained—with attending lectures for women and with carrying on more or less serious studies. One day her parents were thrown into a state of great alarm by finding on the girl's writing-desk, or inside it, a letter in which she took leave of them because, as she said, she could no longer endure her life. Her father, indeed, being a man of some perspicacity, guessed that the girl had no serious suicidal intentions. But he was nonetheless very much shaken and when one day, after a slight passage of words between him and his daughter, she had a first attack of loss of consciousness—an event which was subsequently covered by an amnesia—it was determined, in spite of her reluctance, that she should come to me for treatment. [Freud 1905b, p. 25]

Her treatment with Freud began in October  
1900.

## **The Oedipal Turning Point**

Freud had several years earlier abandoned the theory of actual sexual abuse as a prerequisite for neurotic symptoms and had made new enemies by instead accentuating the role of infantile sexuality in these symptoms. By analyzing his own dreams and through working with patients he had begun to suspect a connection which went beyond the seduction theory; the patients' stories of childhood were founded on an *experienced* reality but the child's fantasy could seldom be distinguished from the external reality. Freud thought that the roots of seduction memories were to be sought in the perverse needs of the child, stimulated by autoerotic activity. He was engaged in his self-analysis in which he continually studied his own dreams, seeking to unmask his own infantile and

adult desires; “A recurring theme was love and jealousy, a triangle where the parent of the opposite sex was the desired one, following the structure in the antique drama of fate, *Oedipus Rex*. These lusts and instinctual desires were generally repressed but could live on in the unconscious and later be expressed in symptoms,” Freud wrote to Fliess in 1897 (Masson 1985). Freud’s symptoms—which intensified after his father’s death in 1896—including migraine, digestion problems, nose infections (Fliess operated on him for this), fatigue, train phobia, certain inhibitions, an obsessive concern with death, depression, and anxiety, had disappeared or been alleviated with time. His passionate friendship with and idealization of Wilhelm Fliess (a prominent ear, nose, and throat specialist who lived in Berlin),

with whom he conducted an intensive and lively dialogue, primarily by correspondence, began to ebb. He had finished his great work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, and was disappointed at its cool reception. At the time of his first contact with Dora, he was busy with his next research project concerning the psychopathology of daily life. When, after three months, Dora broke off the analysis, Freud wrote up the case study under the title “Dreams and Hysteria,” intending to send it to *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, the same magazine that had promised to publish *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. For various reasons he changed his plans to make the Dora case public at that time. It was not published until 1905, four years later.

He begins his text in this way:

In 1895 and 1896 I put forward certain views upon the pathogenesis of hysterical symptoms and upon the mental processes occurring in hysteria. Since that time several years have passed. In now proposing, therefore, to substantiate those views by giving a detailed report of the history of a case and its treatment, I cannot avoid making a few introductory remarks, for the purpose partly of justifying from various standpoints the step I am taking, and partly of diminishing the expectations to which it will give rise. [1905b, p. 7]

He excuses himself for having to publish things about his patients that ought not to be revealed and for which he might be blamed with reference to medical discretion. But his duty to science means that as such “it becomes a disgraceful piece of cowardice on my part to neglect doing so as long as I can avoid causing direct personal injury to the single patient concerned” (1905b, p. 8). He defends himself as

well against those who will read his contribution to the psychopathology of neurosis as a “*roman à clef*” designed for their private delectation.” With great intensity he justifies the necessity to discuss “sexual questions with all possible frankness” and to call “the organs and functions of sexual life by their proper names.” It is also remarkable that Freud first emphasizes the advantage of the case having lasted only 3 months, which made it possible for him to record the case history in its entirety. He then defends himself by pointing out that “some of the problems of the case had not even been attacked and others had only been imperfectly elucidated; whereas, if the work had been continued, we should no doubt have obtained the fullest possible enlightenment upon every particular of the case. In the following pages,

therefore, I can present only a fragment of an analysis” (1905b, p. 12).

After expressing these reservations Freud begins the history of the illness itself with a rather confident statement:

In my *Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, 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 can be assigned a recognizable position in the chain of mental events. 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. [A pressing reason to write about Dora was to show how he worked with dreams and Dora’s two dreams occupied a leading position in her analysis by Freud.] And I may add that this knowledge [translating the language of dreams] is essential for the psychoanalyst. The dream is one of the

detours by which repression can be evaded. The following fragment from the history of the treatment of a hysterical girl is intended to show the way in which the interpretation of dreams plays a part in the work of analysis. It will at the same time give me a first opportunity of publishing at sufficient length to prevent further misunderstanding some of my views upon the psychical process of hysteria and upon its organic determinants. [Freud 1905b, p. 15]

### **The Archeological Metaphor**

Readers who are familiar with the technique of analysis as it was expounded in the *Studies on Hysteria*, 1895, will perhaps be surprised that it should not have been possible in three months to find a complete solution at least for those of the symptoms which were taken in hand. This will become intelligible when I explain that since the date of the *Studies* psychoanalytical technique has been completely revolutionized. At that time the work of analysis started out from symptoms, and aimed at clearing them up

one after the other. Since then I have abandoned that technique, because I found it totally inadequate for dealing with the finer structure of a neurosis. I now let the patient himself choose the subject of the day's work, and in that way I start out from whatever surface his unconscious happens to be presenting to his notice at the moment. But on this plan everything that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time. In spite of this apparent disadvantage, the new technique is far superior to the old, and indeed there can be no doubt that it is the only possible one. In the face of the incompleteness of my analytic results, I had no choice but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity. I have restored what is missing, taking the best models known to me from other analyses; but, like a conscientious archaeologist, I have not omitted to

mention in each case where the authentic parts end and my constructions begin. [Freud 1905b, p. 12]

The goal was to reconstruct and restore the connections that had been broken and that had been caused by

the patients' inability to give an ordered history of their life in so far as it coincides with the history of their illness. [This] is not only characteristic of the neurosis; it also possesses great theoretical significance. ... Whereas the practical aim of the treatment is to remove all possible symptoms and to replace them by conscious thoughts, we may regard it as a second and theoretical aim to repair all the damage to the patient's memory. These two aims are coincident. When one is reached, so is the other; and the same path leads to them both. [Freud 1905b, p. 17, 18]

Aside from the archeology metaphor, Freud also used Leonardo's metaphor of the sculptor working *per via di levare*— he takes away the

fragments that hide the sculpture's form, which is complete within the block of stone (Freud 1905, p. 260). Steven Marcus (1985), Professor of Literature at Columbia University, calls Freud a modern author, a modernist, who has created in his preface a Nabokov-like frame for his story and interacts with the reader by comparing himself and his story with a hypothetical storyteller of the same history. Freud writes:

I must now turn to consider a further complication to which I should certainly give no space if I were a man of letters engaged upon the creation of a mental state like this for a short story, instead of being a medical man engaged upon its dissection. The element to which I must now allude can only serve to obscure and efface the outlines of the fine poetic conflict which we have been able to ascribe to Dora. This element would rightly fall a sacrifice to the censorship of a writer, for he, after all, simplifies and abstracts when he appears in

the character of a psychologist. But in the world of reality, which I am trying to depict here, a complication of motives, an accumulation and conjunction of mental activities—in a word overdetermination—is the rule.<sup>2</sup> [Freud 1905b, p. 59]

Freud emphasized that the practical goal of treatment was to repair all the damage to the patient's memory and that when a successful conclusion had been reached the patient would own *his history*.

### **Who Owned Dora's History?**

Who owned Dora's history? When Erikson asks this question in *Insight and Responsibility* (1964) he makes a distinction between reality and actuality. He says that reality is the world of phenomenal experience whereas actuality is the world of the current, present, immediate, and active; it includes a participation in the world in

the company of others, preferably with a minimum of defensive maneuvering and a maximum of mutual activation. When Dora confronted her environment, hoping to get it to divulge its secrets and reveal its lies, she did this out of a young person's need and right to test the correctness, the durability, and the truth of the attitudes, methods, ideas, and ideals in her environment. Loyalty, constancy, and fidelity are the strengths and crises of adolescence. According to Erikson, Dora was concerned with the immediate, historic truth while Freud wanted to get at the genetic truth behind the symptoms, considering it the patient's duty and responsibility to come to a realization of these genetic connections and not be inhibited by her environment, as Dora was.

In a postscript Freud writes:

On a date which is not a matter of complete indifference, on the first of April (times and dates, as we know, were never without significance for her), Dora came to see me again: to finish her story and to ask for help once more. One glance at her face, however, was enough to tell me that she was not in earnest over her request ... she had come for help on account of a right-sided facial neuralgia, from which she was now suffering day and night. "How long has it been going on?" "Exactly a fortnight." I could not help smiling; for I was able to show her that exactly a fortnight earlier she had read a piece of news that concerned me in the newspaper.<sup>3</sup> And this she confirmed. Her alleged facial neuralgia was thus a self-punishment—remorse at having once given Herr K. a box on the ear, and at having transferred her feelings of revenge on to me. I do not know what kind of help she wanted from me, but I promised to forgive her for having deprived me of the satisfaction of affording her a far more radical cure for her troubles. Years have gone by since her visit. In the meantime the girl has married,

and indeed—unless all the signs mislead me—she has married the young man who came into her associations at the beginning of the analysis of the second dream. Just as the first dream represented her turning away from the man she loved to her father — that is to say, her flight from life into disease—so the second dream announced that she was about to tear herself free from her father and had been reclaimed once more by the realities of life. [Freud 1905b, p. 122]

What can have happened to Dora and between her and Freud? As we will hear, Freud himself asked that question, just as many analysts after him have returned to the Dora case history to state, clarify, interpret, explain, and go through the problems and difficulties Freud and Dora had when they met each other.

### **A History of Illness**

In Dora's case, thanks to her father's shrewdness which I have remarked upon more than once already, there was no need for me to look about for the points of contact between the circumstances of the patient's life and her illness, at all events in its most recent form. Her father told me that while they were at B he and his family had formed an intimate friendship with a married couple who had been settled there for several years. Frau K. had nursed him during his long illness, and had in that way, he said, earned a title to his undying gratitude. Herr K. had always been most kind to Dora. He had gone for walks with her when he was there, and had made her small presents; but no one had thought any harm of that. Dora had taken the greatest care of the K.'s two little children, and been almost a mother to them. [Freud 1905b, p. 25]

Two years earlier Dora was to have spent the summer at a lake in the Alps with the K. family, but after a few days, as her father was making preparations to depart, Dora had suddenly

declared with great determination that she was going with him. It was not until some days later that she told her mother that Herr K. had had the audacity to make her a proposition while they were on a walk after a boat trip on the lake. Herr K. denied this and in turn threw suspicion on Dora. He said that he had heard from his wife that Dora was greatly interested in sexual matters and had “even read Mantegazza’s *Physiology of Love* and books of that sort in their house on the lake. It was most likely that she had been over-excited by such reading and had merely ‘fancied’ the whole scene.” Even if her father did not doubt that this incident was responsible for Dora’s depression, he could not do what Dora demanded, which was to break off relations with the K. family. His friendship with Frau K. was sincere; nothing unseemly had been

kept secret; they were just two poor wretches who gave each other comfort and he wanted Freud's help to bring her to her senses.

Freud resolved to suspend judgment of the true state of affairs until he had heard the other side:

The experience with Herr K—his making love to her and the insult to her honor which was involved—seems to provide in Dora's case the psychical trauma which Breuer and I declared long ago to be the indispensable prerequisite for the production of a hysterical disorder. But this new case also presents all the difficulties which have since led me to go beyond that theory, besides an additional difficulty of a special kind. For, as so often happens in histories of cases of hysteria, the trauma that we know of as having occurred in the patient's past life is insufficient to explain or to determine the *particular character* of the symptoms. [Freud 1905b, pp. 26-27]

Several of the symptoms were present long before the scene by the lake. If he was not to abandon the traumatic theory, Freud had to go back to Dora's childhood and look there for influences or impressions that might have had an effect analogous to a trauma. He often had to trace back the patients' life history to their earliest years: "When the first difficulties of the treatment had been overcome, Dora told me of an earlier episode with Herr K., which was even better calculated to act as a sexual trauma." She was 14 years old at the time. Herr K. arranged things so that he was alone with her at his place of business. There

he suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips. This was surely just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never before been approached. But Dora had at that moment a

violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door. She nevertheless continued to meet Herr K. Neither of them ever mentioned the little scene; and according to her account Dora kept it a secret till her confession during the treatment. For some time afterwards, however, she avoided being alone with Herr K. [Freud 1905b, p. 28]

Freud considers Dora's reaction hysterical, as he considers it to be in anyone in whom an occasion for sexual excitement elicits feelings that are predominantly or exclusively unpleasurable. He interprets the reaction as a reversal of affect and a displacement of genital sensations to the mouth (from genitally felt pleasure to disgust) and to the breast (the touch of an erect penis to a sensation of pressure). Years afterward Dora still felt the pressure on her upper body as well as an unwillingness to

walk past any man whom she saw engaged in eager or affectionate conversation with a lady. Freud links together these impressions and explains:

The disgust is the symptom of repression in the erotogenic oral zone, which as we shall hear, had been over-indulged in Dora's infancy by the habit of sensual sucking. The pressure of the erect member probably led to an analogous change in the corresponding female organ, the clitoris; and the excitation of this second erotogenic zone was referred by a process of displacement to the simultaneous pressure against the thorax and became fixed there. Her avoidance of men who might possibly be in a state of sexual excitement follows the mechanism of a phobia, its purpose being to safeguard her against any revival of the repressed perception. [Freud 1905b, p. 30]

Freud makes the point that it was difficult to get Dora to concentrate her attention on Herr K.

She declared that she was finished with him, but she could not forgive her father for continuing his relations with the K. family. She was also completely convinced that her father's relation to Frau K. was a common love affair, which began when Frau K. "had officially taken on the position of nurse" to her seriously ailing father. They were together in B., where both families were staying, but also during the summer holidays when her father and Frau K. occupied hotel rooms next to each other. Her father defended this friendly relation by saying that the children had Frau K. to thank for the fact that he was alive. Dora's mother confirmed this: once, when Dora's father had planned to commit suicide in the woods, it had been Frau K. who had gone after him and saved his life. Dora regarded this as fictitious, a camouflage to

account for a rendezvous in the woods. The presents everyone—her mother, Frau K., and Dora herself—received from her father simply confirmed for her the fact that he wanted to buy them off. Even after the move to Vienna, when Dora had begun her analysis with Freud, she had seen her father and Frau K. together on the street. Freud

could not in general dispute Dora's characterization of her father; and there was one particular respect in which it was easy to see that her reproaches were justified. When she was feeling embittered she used to be overcome by the idea that she had been handed over to Herr K. as the price of his tolerating the relations between her father and his wife; and her rage at her father's making such a use of her was visible behind her affection for him. At other times she was quite well aware that she had been guilty of exaggeration in talking like this.... But as a matter of fact things were in a position in which each of

the two men avoided drawing any conclusions from the other's behavior which would have been awkward for his own plans. [Freud 1905b, p. 34]

But

when a patient brings forward a sound and incontestable train of argument during psychoanalytical treatment, the physician is liable to feel a moment's embarrassment, and the patient may take advantage of it by asking: "This is all perfectly correct and true, isn't it? What do you want to change in it, now that I've told it you?" But it soon becomes evident that the patient is using thoughts of this kind, which the analysis cannot attack, for the purpose of cloaking others which are anxious to escape from criticism and from consciousness. A string of reproaches against other people leads one to suspect the existence of a string of self-reproaches with the same content. All that need be done is to turn back each particular reproach on to the speaker himself. [Freud 1905b, p. 35]

Freud points out that Dora had for a long time closed her eyes to what her father's relation to Frau K. involved, and this in spite of the fact that Dora's governess tried to open her eyes to the relation and to get her to take sides against Frau K. Dora had interpreted this as jealousy on the part of the governess and when she realized that the governess was more interested in her father than in Dora, she became furious and saw to it that the governess was dismissed. Encouraged by Freud, Dora admitted that her loving relationship with K's children during their time in B. was an expression of her love for Herr K., but she said that it had all been over since the scene at the lake. Nevertheless, some of Dora's symptoms—the cough, the attacks of voice loss—had been bound to her love and longing for Herr K, which she was trying to hide

also with the help of the intensified childhood love for her father.

### **The Sherlock Holmesian and the Patriarchal Tradition**

Like many contemporary commentators of our times I would like to distance myself at this point. Freud saw how vulnerable Dora's position was in respect to men and how men and women close to her behaved, but for a complex of reasons it is probable that he put up defenses against unconditionally investigating Dora's question: "What do you want to change?" He may unconsciously have shared the blindness of the patriarchal society around him with its focus on exploitation, and/or he lacked our knowledge and insight into the particularly fragile identity and self-esteem of adolescence. We have learned that there may be fateful consequences if adults

close to young persons, on whom they are still dependent, exploit them to satisfy their own needs. To be a failure, to be humiliated in dealing with those who are near and dear, may shake to the foundations their faith in their own powers and put their self-esteem completely out of balance. Rage against the adults who have so betrayed the child by failing to support the development of the adolescent's ego and superego releases primitive aggression that may be turned against their own bodies, intensifying the symptoms and/or be turned against the analyst, putting the treatment at risk. Altogether too busy proving his own theories, Freud directed all his attention to Dora's inner reality, her own contribution to the events, "turning back each particular reproach on to the speaker himself' (Freud 1905b, p. 35). The truth was to

be found within the ailing Dora and not in her environment. For that reason Freud was not willing to follow his own instructions, presented a decade later, to “listen with evenly suspended attention, allowing yourself to be taken by surprise by every new turn in the process, and always with an open mind” (Freud 1912c). He insisted on getting Dora to confess her love and longing for Herr K. and in spite of the fact that he saw the connection between himself and Herr K, he did not seem capable of seeing how Dora might interpret his own commitment, that is, his own desire to discover the truth of his own theories. His technique was suggestive, persuasive, convincing; he constantly pressed Dora to confirm his impressions and interpretations, giving Dora little room to follow up her associations herself. He worked out the details

brilliantly, aiming at the reconstruction of the original oedipal situation, and he thought his most important duty was to discover the hidden meaning, rooted in childhood, in every symptom.

The question of whether the symptoms of hysteria are of psychological or somatic origin is not the right one, Freud points out. Of necessity they are psychologically determined but receive contributions from both sides. They cannot come into being without a certain degree of somatic compliance. The connection, however, varies from case to case. Thus a temporary physical irritation (such as the cough) may act as “the grain of sand around which the oyster forms the pearl,” serving as a loving identification with the father afflicted with a lung disorder, or expressing an unconscious fellatio fantasy where

someone's (her father's, Herr K's) penis irritates the mucous membrane. What is important is that the symptoms disappear when the meaning hidden in them has been discovered. There is fantasy and sexual content in that meaning, which may be perverse (transgressing of the sexual functions with respect to body part and sexual object), developing out of the seed that is enclosed in the child's undifferentiated sexual tendencies, and that often build further on the child's normal autoerotic activities (like thumb-sucking). Freud makes detailed and polemical comments in order to defend the existence of "perverse fantasies," stressing the importance of speaking to patients openly about such matters without beating about the bush (Freud 1905b, p. 49).

Dora was beside herself when she was accused of having imagined the scene at the lake. Freud, however, did not doubt that she was telling the truth, but assumed that there were innumerable small signs that had made Herr K. believe to the very end that he could be sure of the girl's affection for him. He also interpreted Dora's illness as "tendentious." Even though there were internal motives such as self-punishment, remorse, penitence—in which case, said Freud, the therapeutic task is easier—there was also a clear surface motive for Dora, "i.e., to touch her father's heart and to detach him from Frau K" In a footnote in 1923 he makes a distinction between the primary and the secondary type of gain from illness. But in his work with Dora he follows what Donald Spence

(1987) calls the Sherlock Holmes tradition.

Freud writes:

In this way I gained an insight into a conflict which was well calculated to unhinge the girl's mind. On the one hand she was filled with regret at having rejected the man's proposition, and with longing for his company and all the little signs of his affection; while on the other hand these feelings of tenderness and longing were combated by powerful forces, amongst which her pride was one of the most obvious. Thus she had succeeded in persuading herself that she had done with Herr K—that was the advantage she derived from this typical process of repression; and yet she was obliged to summon up her infantile affection for her father and to exaggerate it, in order to protect herself against the feelings of love which were constantly pressing forward into consciousness. [1905b, p. 58]

The further fact that she was almost incessantly a prey to the most embittered

jealousy seemed to admit of still another determination: “there lay concealed a feeling of jealousy which had a lady as its object—a feeling, that is, which could only be based upon an affection on Dora’s part for one of her own sex” (Freud 1905b, p. 62). Freud then enumerates the “proofs” for Dora’s feelings of Frau K. For years she and Dora lived in the closest intimacy. When she visited, she shared a room with Frau K; she was the wife’s confidante and adviser in all the difficulties of her married life. Dora received presents from her father in which she recognized Frau K’s taste, and Frau K. praised Dora’s “adorable white body.” The worst outrage may have been that Frau K. had betrayed her confidence and blackened her character after she had demanded redress from Herr K. Frau K. had sacrificed Dora without a

moment's hesitation so that her relations to Dora's father might not be disturbed.

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 unconscious.... These masculine or, more properly speaking, gynaecophilic currents of feeling are to be regarded as typical of the unconscious erotic life of hysterical girls. [Freud 1905b, pp. 62-63]

### **A Fictional Supervision**

In the extensive literature about Dora derived from Freud's case histories there are many interpretations, explanations, excuses, defences, and rebukes. Everyone knows that it is easy to be wise after the fact and advance

ingenious theories for others; there is quite simply more freedom in observing from a distance. But we also know that outsiders possess only a “normative” competence, that is, a general understanding, while the involved participants, the patient and the analyst, have a “privileged” competence (Spence 1987). With a certain amount of hesitation one can put this question: How would you supervise Freud if he applied for supervision of his analysis of Dora? Would you point out the complication that he knew the family? That her father brought Dora to him with the order, get her to listen to reason? That he had advance information about Dora and had already anticipated a great deal about her, which might interfere with the need to listen with freely floating attention? Freud might be warned that Dora would interpret his inquisitive

attitude, as though he were gathering evidence, as proof that his motive was not to analyze her in order to help her understand herself and her predicament and help her deal with it, but to analyze the material from the perspective of his own intentions and to confirm what he already knew. It may be possible to prove how his premature interpretations and active interrogation were bound to increase Dora's defensiveness and resistance. He might then defend himself by saying that "everything I call Dora's attention to is present in what she says!" One could well ask Freud, "What do you want to do? What is your goal?" and he might answer, "I want to create and validate the psychoanalytical theory; I want to confirm my theories about hysteria and use the patient for this end—and thus I must often use all my brilliance, my

power of persuasion, to gather all the details into an argument in order not to be silenced, as I was after I published my book on *The Interpretation of Dreams*. But let me tell the story!”

Just at the moment when there was a prospect that the material that was coming up for analysis would throw light on an obscure point in Dora’s childhood, she reported that a few nights earlier she had once again had a dream which she had already dreamt in exactly the same way on many previous occasions. A periodically recurrent dream was by its very nature calculated to rouse my curiosity; and in any case it was justifiable in the interests of the treatment to consider the way in which the dream worked into the analysis as a whole. I therefore determined to make an especially careful investigation of it. Here is the dream as related by Dora: “A house was on fire. My father was standing beside my bed and woke me up. I dressed 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 1905b, p. 64]

*S(supervisor)*: What do you think? Why is the dream recurring right now?

*F(reud)*: That's just what I was going to find out. I posed—as usual—questions about every detail. I naturally first asked her when she had first dreamt it.

*S*: But then you are jumping from the current and immediate, from what is implicit in the fact that she tells you her dream.

*F*: But wait a minute. Her answer, that she had first dreamt it by the lake where the scene with Herr K. had taken place, “naturally heightened my expectations from the clearing up of the dream” (Freud 1905b, p. 64).

*S*: It may, however, be risky to seek the clearing up of the dream before you have made sure that you understand what she wants to say about the relationship between the two of you. One could, for instance, hear her say

through the dream that we (Dora, the children) are in danger; Father (i.e., you, the analyst holding the frame) shall save us. Mother is too occupied with her jewel-case and there is a risk that you will be, too, if your main wish is to validate the psychoanalytical theory and confirm your theories about hysteria using me, the patient, to that end.

Freud can now react in various ways. He may be able to accommodate the supervisor's perspective on the interactive significance of the dreams. He may already be open to following up here and now his impressions and experiences of the communicative significance of transference. He is, however, likely to be bound to too great an extent by his conviction that he should bring out the hidden truth (*per via di levare*) and as a result he will probably turn defensive at every effort to get him to pay attention to the meaning and the consequences of his own interventions

and his motives for them. His theoretical metaphors are at risk of being reduced to rigid rules.

*F:* But wait. Let me finish the story. She has, of course, “already had some training in dream interpretation from having previously analyzed a few minor specimens, from taking the dream bit by bit and telling me what occurred to her in connection with it.” Her first contribution was: “Father has been having a dispute with Mother in the last few days, because she locks the dining room door at night. My brother’s room, you see, has no separate entrance, but can only be reached through the dining room. Father does not want my brother to be locked in like that at night. He says it will not do: something might happen in the night so that it might be necessary to leave the room” (1905b, p. 65). Listen now! These words “took me aback. They seemed to have an ambiguous ring about them. Are not certain physical needs referred to in the same words? Now, in a line of associations ambiguous words (or, as we may call them,

‘switch words’) act like points at a junction. If the points are switched across from the position in which they appear to lie in the dream, then we find ourselves on another set of rails; and along this second track run the thoughts which we are in search of but which still lie concealed behind the dream” (1905b, p. 65).

*S:* (Thinks: How shall I get him to stop and listen to himself? If I stress the risk of his acting instead of understanding and point out that in view of his theoretical expectations, it is he who has his hand on the switch, I may forestall something he is anxious to accomplish. He may perceive me as doubtful or critical of his theories, questioning his technique. He may think that I want to compete with him. If I make use of my hypothesis that he and Dora are already deeply involved in a mutual, charged drama, I may myself easily wind up as another co-actor in the play. Let me therefore wait and see.)

*F:* I elicited from her the fact that she had dreamt the dream three times after the scene by the lake. After her return to K’s she went to lie

down as usual on the sofa in the bedroom to have a short sleep. She suddenly awoke and saw Herr K. standing beside her and asked him sharply what it was he wanted there. He was not going to be prevented from coming to his room and he had wanted to fetch something. She then procured a key to the room but it was gone on the following afternoon when she wanted to lie down again on the sofa. I said then that her dream corresponded to an intention: “I shall have no rest and I can get no quiet sleep until I am out of this house.” I also knew that, like all the others, she would applaud me if I limited myself to that sentence. But I learned when I analyzed my own dreams that this isn’t the way it is. I know, and against every insidious objection I must stick to my theory, that every dream is a wish that is represented as fulfilled, a wish created in childhood. A daytime thought, current events—and I know that you, a supervisor, were about to point out the links between dreams and me and us today —“may very well play the part of an *entrepreneur* for a dream; but the *entrepreneur*, who, as people say, has the

idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a *capitalist* who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dream is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, *a wish from the unconscious*" (1905b, p. 87). Quite simply I don't have the right to stop and simplify as you might wish.

*S:* You are writing an essay on sexual theory in which you present childhood masturbation as the most important factor in the etiology of hysteria. You also write that childhood masturbation is demonstrable in all of us, and it can not be a coincidence nor can it be a matter of indifference to you if you, with Dora's help, are going to be able to confirm your supposition. I can understand that. But both as a scientist and as Dora's analyst, your first duty is to listen for Dora's reaction to your questions.

*F:* When this dream was related we were involved in a topic that had to do with masturbation and bed-wetting, because Dora was a bed-wetter and its cause is often masturbation.

Dora had asked why just she was ill and she had shifted the blame onto her father. He had contracted syphilis through loose living and had infected her mother, with whom Dora identified. As I was on the point of answering her question as to why it was just precisely she who had become ill, I noticed that she was playing with the little reticule she was wearing at her waist that day. It was a symptomatic act when, as she lay on the sofa talking, she opened it, put a finger into it, shut it again, and so on. I looked on for some time, and then explained to her the nature of a “symptomatic act.” That is convincing, isn’t it? No human being can hide his secret: one whose lips are sealed babbles with his fingertips; betrayal seeps out of his every pore. That is exactly why it is quite possible to perform the task of making conscious what is most hidden in the soul. This is apropos of how Dora reacted. All right. I also asked her for associations to the jewel-case. Yes, her mother is very fond of jewelry and had had a lot given her by her father. Four years earlier her mother and father had had a dispute because he had brought her a

bracelet instead of pearl drops to wear in her ears, which she had asked for. I said that she, Dora, might have thought that she would have accepted it with pleasure herself. She didn't know about that and neither did she know how her mother came into the dream. I promised to explain that to her later. I wondered if Herr K. had given her any jewelry. No, but Herr K. had given her an expensive jewel-case. 'Then a return present would have been very appropriate!' (1905b, p. 69), I said, adding that "jewel-case" is a favorite expression for the female genitals. She reacted immediately; she knew that I would say that. But I replied that she was saying that she herself knew it. The meaning of the dream was becoming even clearer. Before we end today's session, let me summarize the synthesis of dreams for you. The wish that the dream wants to come true always springs from the period of childhood. The dream expresses this wish anew, and it tries to correct the present day by the measure of childhood. And what Dora is trying to express in her dream is: "Dear Father, protect me again as you used to in my childhood, and prevent my bed

from being wetted!” The day after, Dora brought me an addendum: each time after waking up she had smelt smoke. I reminded her that I would often say, “There can be no smoke without fire!” She answered that everyone smokes. An addendum to dreams usually contains the most obscure thought, which here was the longing for a kiss, linked both to the episode when she was 14 years old and to childhood thumb-sucking.

I realized that there was also a link to me in the transference, that she would like to have a kiss from me. I told her this and added that from the re-appearance of the dream in the last few days I had to conclude that she was saying that the same situation had arisen once again: she had decided to give up the treatment, to which only her father had made her come. To this can be added her aversion to every new doctor, originating in her concern that they might find the reason for her suffering, discover the vicious circle between masturbation and the stomach cramps and nervous asthma that emerged during abstinence. And I had now discovered her secret and she wished to

take her revenge. But today we can only touch on this transference theme, highly significant both practically and theoretically, since I must interrupt the supervision.

Here the supervisor is left with many unanswered questions and suppositions. Who has put Freud in the position of the seducer? Is it he himself, a middle-aged man tempted by the young girl's secrets and jewel-box? Is it Dora who has chosen this role for him in accordance with what Freud writes about the meaning of transference in his postscript to the case history?

Transferences are

new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and fantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way: a whole series of psychological

experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment. ... Some of these ... are merely new impressions or reprints. Others are more ingeniously constructed. [Freud 1905b, p. 116]

What part does Freud play in establishing his position as seducer, the one who arouses Dora's desire, fear, and resistance? How does it influence this process that Freud works with the metaphor "a regularly formed dream stands upon two legs"? This places the dream at the point of intersection between the legs, at the genitals: thus the dream may be seen as a sexual organ to be inspected, penetrated. In addition, an experiment carried out by Freud with a match stand is of current interest in regard to the dream. Freud wanted to go back to one of Dora's associations to the dream, "that something might

happen in the night so that it might be necessary to leave the room,” and he conducted

a little experiment which was, as usual, successful. There happened to be a large match stand on the table. I asked Dora to look round and see whether she noticed anything special on the table, something that was not there as a rule. She noticed nothing. I then asked her if she knew why children were forbidden to play with matches. “Yes; on account of the risk of fire. My uncle’s children are very fond of playing with matches.” “Not only on that account. They are warned not to ‘play with fire’ and a particular belief is associated with the warning.” She knew nothing about it. “Very well, then; the fear is that if they do they will wet their bed.” [Freud 1905b, p. 71]

Might this have contributed to the unconscious but mutual “playing with fire” between Freud and Dora? Freud insisted that Dora confess her love and longing for Herr K,

and although he recognized the connection between himself and Herr K, he was blinded by his own strong involvement, his desire and eagerness to reveal “her secret.” Dora may very well have interpreted this as Freud’s desire to penetrate her, as his own desire to play with fire.

### **Stealing the Fire; Opening Pandora’s Box**

Many have reacted to Freud’s tone with Dora, that blooming young girl with intelligent, attractive features, that pathetic teenager brought by her father to him, a 44-year-old neurologist and pater familias. She told him a sad story of being exploited, molested, and betrayed by the adults around her. But instead of showing her compassion and sympathy, Freud treated her as a dangerous adversary. He wrestled with her, set traps, pressed her against the wall with confrontations and interpretations. This might be

understandable if, like Aaron (the analyst interviewed in *Psychoanalysis, the Impossible Profession*), one adopts Freud's perspective. Freud saw in Dora a Pandora, a provocative, dangerous Woman:

The whole story is full of boxes. Wherever you turn you stumble over a box. The jewel-box in the first dream. The little reticule Dora played with while she lay talking. The experiment with the matchstand. Freud linked fire to bed-wetting, which he also saw rooted in the myth of Prometheus where the stolen fire was hidden in a phallus-like oval stalk. Pandora, on the other hand, was created by the gods to punish mankind for the theft of fire by Prometheus. Formed from clay and water, she was given great beauty and a spiteful disposition. Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus, took her as his wife and in his house she opened the fatal box, thereby releasing the evil and dangerous forces which mankind had previously been protected from. Here we hear the echo of

Freud's own words: "No one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human breast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed." [Malcolm 1981:27]

Freud contributed to the making the grammar of the unconscious—which had always been open to poets and artists—accessible to those in health-care services as well as to science. Speech begins with the original dialogue between child and mother (or “the attentive other”). The infant's cry calls forth the accessible mother, and in this first dialogue the concepts are created (phase specific and via the paternal order), which are then integrated into inner endeavors, giving meaning to the child's experiences. At the same time the relation between the internal and the external reality is being organized. The original dialogue was

revived in Dora's dream; out of her painful, distressing situation she calls out for her father to save her and this is repeated in the analytical situation. She sought shelter with the analyst at the same time as she was setting up precisely the danger from which she was trying to be saved. The aim of the relation and the analytical situation is just this: to facilitate the creation of mutual concepts through which the participants can communicate about such experiences. The patient expresses himself or herself, like Dora, both verbally and non-verbally. Analyst and patient create a comprehensible language, assuming that the analyst is able to listen and understand what the patient is trying to say about him, the analyst. The image the patient creates of the analyst may also provide important guidance leading to a better

understanding of the analyst's own person, technique, and counter-transference, presenting material for self-analysis and supervision. But Freud was much too preoccupied with his own desire to force the secret out of Dora's dream, and this prevented him from seeing anything other than what he wanted to see.

**Revenge: “Do You Know, Doctor, that I am Here for the Last Time Today?”**

Several weeks after the first dream Dora related her second dream. When work with this had been concluded the analysis was broken off. During this time Dora had herself begun to ask questions about the connection between her own acts and her presumed motives. One of these questions was: “Why did she say nothing about the scene by the lake for some days after it had

happened?” The other, “Why did she then suddenly tell her parents about it at all?”

Moreover, her having felt so deeply injured by Herr K’s proposition seemed to me in general to need explanation, especially as I was beginning to realize that Herr K. himself had not regarded his invitation to Dora as a mere frivolous attempt at seduction. I looked upon her having told her parents of the episode as an action which she had taken when she was already under the influence of a morbid craving for revenge. A normal girl, I am inclined to think, will deal with a situation of this kind by herself. [Freud 1905b, p. 95]

In the second dream she relates:

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 travelling in the meantime, but I know nothing about that. I walked into the porter’s lodge, and enquired for our flat. The maidservant opened the door to me and replied that Mother and the others were already at the cemetery [Friedhof]. [Freud 1905b, p. 94]

Dora’s associations (rendered here in a different order than Freud reproduced them): In Dresden she had declined her cousin’s offer to

act as a guide. She had gone alone to the famous picture gallery and sat for 2 hours in front of the Sistine Madonna, rapt in silent admiration. Freud reminded Dora of the young German man—a passing acquaintance whom Freud later believed was Dora’s husband—and his supposed longing for Dora and her box. Dora associated to the evening before when her father had asked her to fetch some brandy, and she had impatiently asked her mother for the key to the sideboard. But her mother had been deep in conversation with someone else. Dora had had to ask one hundred times over. Her father looked tired and ill that evening. In her dream he was already dead. In her dream fantasy Dora had left her home for a strange town—perhaps her father’s heart had broken with grief. Thus she would be revenged. Via the letter from her

mother in the dream Freud and Dora are led back to the scene by the lake where Herr K. had said, ‘You know I get nothing out of my wife.’ Dora had then wanted to walk home around the lake but since this would have taken 2½ hours she had taken the boat instead. The wood in the dream had been like the wood by the lake; she had also looked at the same wood in a picture at the Secessionist exhibition. In the background of the picture there were nymphs. For Freud “a certain suspicion became a certainty.” From station [*Bahnhof*, literally “railway court”] to cemetery [*Friedhof*, literally “peace court”] to vestibule [*Vorhof*, literally “fore-court”]; there were nymphs in the background of a thick wood—the anatomical term for female genitals, a “symbolic geography of sex.”

If this interpretation were correct, therefore, there lay concealed behind the first situation in the dream a fantasy of defloration, the fantasy of a man seeking to force an entrance into the female genitals. I informed Dora of the conclusions I had reached. The impression made upon her must have been forcible, for there immediately appeared a piece of the dream which had been forgotten: she went calmly to her room, and began reading a big book that lay on her writing table. [Freud 1905b, p. 99]

This led back to childhood fantasies and wishes. In her fantasy she has given birth to a child 9 months after the scene by the lake:

Her supposed attack of appendicitis had thus enabled the patient with the modest means at her disposal (the pains and the menstrual flow) to realize a fantasy of childbirth. ... 'You are going about to this very day parrying the consequences of your false step with you, so it follows that in your unconscious you must have regretted

the upshot of the scene. In your unconscious thoughts, that is to say, you have made an emendation in it". ... The labor of elucidating the second dream had so far occupied two hours. At the end of the second session, when I expressed my satisfaction at the result, Dora replied in a depreciatory tone: "Why, has anything so very remarkable come out?" These words prepared me for the advent of fresh revelations. She opened the third session with these words: "Do you know that I am here for the last time today?" - "How can I know, as you have said nothing to me about it?" - "Yes, I made up my mind to put up with it till the New Year (12/31/1900). But I shall wait no longer than that to be cured."- "You know that you are free to stop the treatment at any time. But for today we will go on with our work. When did you come to this decision?" "A fortnight ago, I think." - "That sounds just like a maidservant or a governess - a fortnight's notice." - "There was a governess who gave notice with the K.s, when I was on my visit to them that time by the lake." - "Really? You have never

told me about her. Tell me.” [1905b, pp. 103-105]

Dora then told of the young girl who was employed by the K. family. Herr K. had been importunate in his advances to her, asking her to be nice to him; he got nothing from his wife. Freud says, “Why they are the very words he used afterwards, when he made his proposition to you and you gave him a slap in the face” (1905b, p. 106). The servant girl had given in to him and since then she has hated him. She had not given notice, however, but waited to see if there might not be some change in Herr K. That was why Dora herself waited. This was her motivation for not leaving immediately: first a jealous revenge because he had dared treat her like a governess, then a few days wait before she left to go home; not until a fortnight had passed

did she choose to tell her parents the whole story. And now she comes to Freud giving a fortnight's notice:

You took the affair with Herr K. much more seriously than you have been willing to admit so far. Had not the K.s often talked of getting a divorce? ... May you not have thought that he wanted to get divorced from his wife so as to marry you? ... So it must have been a bitter piece of disillusionment for you when the effect of your charges against Herr K. was not that he renewed his invitation but that he replied instead with denials and slanders. You will agree that nothing makes you so angry as having it thought that you merely fancied the scene by the lake. I know now—and this is what you do not want to be reminded of—that you *did* fancy that Herr K/s proposals were serious, and that he would not leave off until you had married him. [p. 108]

She had listened, without any of her usual contradictions. She seemed to be moved;

she said good-bye to me very warmly, with the heartiest wishes for the New Year, and —came no more. Her father, who called on me two or three times afterwards, assured me that she would come back again, and said it was easy to see that she was eager for the treatment to continue. ... But he 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 friendship between him and Frau K. ... Her breaking off so unexpectedly, just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their highest, and her thus bringing those hopes to nothing— this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part. Her purpose of self-injury also profited by this action. ... Might I perhaps have kept the girl under my treatment if I myself had acted a part, if I had exaggerated the importance to me of her staying on, and had shown a warm personal interest in her—a course which, even after allowing for my position as her physician, would have been tantamount to providing her with a substitute for the affection she

longed for? I do not know. ... Incapacity for meeting a *real* erotic demand is one of the most essential features of a neurosis. Neurotics are dominated by the opposition between reality and fantasy. If what they long for the most intensely in their fantasies is presented them in reality, they nonetheless flee from it; and they abandon themselves to their fantasies the most readily where they need no longer fear to see them realized. Nevertheless, the barrier erected by repression can fall before the onslaught of a violent emotional excitement produced by a real cause; it is possible for a neurosis to be overcome by reality. But we have no general means of calculating through what person or what event such a cure can be effected. [Freud 1905b, pp. 108-110]

## **Epilogue**

Neither do we know what would have happened if Dora had continued the analysis. And of what really happened after the short,

broken-off treatment we have only fragmentary knowledge, in *A Footnote to Freud's Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, which Felix Deutsch published in 1957. In addition there are countless commentaries, analyses, and footnotes to the case. Here I will mention only a few: Hyman Muslin and Merton Gill (1978) stress the importance of working with transference: Freud obviously should have noticed Dora's distrust and her expectation that Freud, just like Herr K., would cheat her if she were to yield to her wishes for "a kiss," and that Freud, like many others before him, would pretend to be interested in her while really only being her father's tool. Dora imagined that Freud's focus on her sexual fantasies was an expression of his desire for her. Muslin and Gill want to supplement Freud's metaphor that a

dream stands on two legs by describing the dream as a platform standing on three legs: one in reality, one in the past, and one in the transference in the relation to the analyst. They shed light as well on the possible counter-transference feelings that may have dominated Freud's work. Robert Langs (1978) in *The Misalliance Dimension in Freud's Case Histories. I. The Case of Dora*, focuses on the consequences entailed in deviation from the neutral, ideal analytic frame; thus he stresses the importance of Freud's previous contact with the father. Steven Marcus (1974) interprets *The Fragment* as a story about Freud himself, where he unconsciously identifies with Dora, giving vent to a masculine protest against his own femininity. Lacan (1985) saw the relation between transference and counter-transference

as a dialectic process where the patient's transference is an answer to the analyst's counter-transference. According to him, Freud was blind to his own counter-transference, which was based on his identification with the virile image of Herr K. He was therefore unable to help Dora out of her negative transference and forward to her own desire. Lacan sees the characterization of Dora in Felix Deutsch's footnote as "one of the most repulsive hysterics [he] ever met" and as a confirmation of the fact that he and Freud did not think of Dora as a woman but as the reflection of their own image—based on the counter-transference—of the provocative woman, Pandora, who can open the dangerous box, full of secrets.

As early as 1964, Erik H. Erikson pointed out how the society, the culture, her age, and her

sex limited Dora's opportunities for development. The only positive identity available to her consisted of becoming an unrecovered patient of a famous analyst. Ida Bauer had married in 1903, not with the young engineer (from the second dream) as Freud had believed, but with one of her father's employees. Her husband's ambition was to become a composer, but he had such little success that Ida's father hired an orchestra so his son-in-law could enjoy listening to his work. One son was born to the couple; their marriage was unhappy. The husband suffered from a severe head and eye injury incurred in the war.

Felix Deutsch met Ida in 1922. He had been called in as a consultant by an ear, nose, and throat specialist; he met her twice. The first time she was in bed with dizziness and buzzing in her

ear, symptoms similar to Ménière's disease. Deutsch was of the opinion that they had a connection with her grown-up son's nightly homecomings. His description of Dora was later critically interpreted by Anne Thompson (1990) in 'The Ending to Dora's Story: Deutsch's Footnote as a Narrative.' She suggests that Deutsch's picture was influenced by his special relation to Freud. He had been a medical doctor before he became an analyst and was also renowned for his theoretical contributions to the understanding of psychosomatic states. For a time he was also Freud's house physician, and he was the first to observe that Freud had cancer of the oral cavity. For various reasons he chose to keep his diagnosis secret from Freud, which caused a break between them for a time. Deutsch revealed this in 1956. One year later he

published his “footnote” with the manifest aim of investigating to what degree present-day views of the conversion process corresponded to Freud’s original ideas about its dynamic. Thompson stresses that Deutsch’s picture of Dora is a highly slanted one, which ought to be exposed to an analysis just as critical as that devoted to Freud’s portrait of Dora. In Deutsch’s version—which even contains information procured from an “anonymous source”—Dora is presented as a woman who fills the room with complaints: about fate, about her parents’ morbidity, about her unhappy childhood, about her son’s and her husband’s indifference, about men’s infidelity. Finally her husband and the other physician who was present, the throat specialist, leave the room. When Dora and Deutsch are left alone, she changes to a

flirtatious, intimate conversation about Freud, announcing “proudly” that she is his famous case, Dora. She asks for Deutsch’s opinion concerning Freud’s interpretations of her two dreams. When he next visited she was no longer in bed and she was no longer dizzy but had an obvious limp in her right leg and was still complaining about her mother, husband, and son. Her brother, who contacted Deutsch after a time, thanked him for the help he had given Dora but expressed his concern about her suffering and her difficult temperament. After having read about Dora’s death— which occurred in New York in 1945—Deutsch obtained access to further details about her via an “anonymous source.” Her husband died of a coronary in 1932—“he preferred to die, as my informant put it, rather than to divorce her.”

Dora's son—who has become a successful musician—helped her flee from Europe to New York. Dora died of cancer of the large intestine, and “her death seemed a blessing to those who were close to her—for she was the one of the most repulsive hysterics I have ever met.” Anne Thompson emphasizes that Dora as a person—who even according to Freud had been diminished to a “case history to be explained in the spirit of Sherlock Holmes”—has altogether disappeared in Deutsch's malicious postscript.

What we have also learned from Freud's experiences with Dora is that we must understand and deal with transference within an established working relationship. The patient's tendency to repeat and, in the situation with the analyst, re-experience previous experiences, has its roots in old expectations and infantile wishes.

The fear of being caught up by life, of being drawn in, raped by it with pain and lust, is what ties Dora and many others to the repetition of wishes and fantasies linked to figures from their childhood. In analysis these patterns can be discovered and clarified—if the analyst does not abandon the patient by being too bound up in his own expectations and theories. Then the risk is, as in the case of Dora, that the analysis will be broken off. Otherwise new experiences that the analysand will have within the analytical situation may offer fresh strategies and solutions to problems. By his interpretations the analyst can help the patient to gain increased self-knowledge. In this process the patient can make surprising discoveries, reaching an insight into himself and his relationships. But it is important to remember that the analyst's interpretations are

always only made up from “ideas” expressing his own interpretations and opinions. They can have a permanent effect only if they stand up against the patient’s critical study and fit in with his own inner reality. Only on this basis can the patient change his own life.

### *Notes*

1. Sigmund Freud published his study and case history of Dora in *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie* in 1905 under the title “Bruchstück einer Hysterieanalyse.” This is found in Freud’s *Gesammelte Werke Bd V* and in *Standard Edition, Vol. VII*.
2. Here Freud is referring to the phenomenon that behind jealousy of the father lies the jealousy of a woman, in this case Frau K. “When in a hysterical woman or girl, the sexual libido which is directed toward men has been energetically suppressed, it will regularly be found that the libido which is directed toward a woman has become vicariously reinforced and even to some extent conscious” (Freud 1905b, p. 60).
3. Probably referred to Freud’s appointment to a professorship in March 1902.

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