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Family, Community, Polis: The Freudian Structure of Feeling*

John Brenkman

I

PSYCHOANALYSIS SHARES with modern literature a penchant for discovering in the forms of personal suffering ciphers of a more general condition. When decked out metaphysically, these ciphers have become, variously, visions of the human condition or mythologies of violence and the sacred, or even allegories of language. I am a partisan of another alternative, where exemplary forms of personal suffering become ciphers of the social relationships in which we wittingly and unwittingly participate. I therefore look to psychoanalysis to contribute to the cultural interpretation of the modern forms of individuality, and to help disclose the norms and the pathologies that typically occur in the making of the socialized individual in our society.

Psychoanalysis has generally left its ties to social theory fragmented and largely covert. Moreover, it tends to invert the relation between cultural forms and specifically psychoanalytic concepts, believing the latter to be purely descriptive of the psychic mechanism and then deriving the cultural forms from them. Psychoanalysis also tends to eschew historical questions by casting the historical context of life-histories as merely contingent elements in a universal structure.

Nowhere are these intellectual habits more deeply ingrained than in the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex is also perhaps the most developed figure of exemplary suffering that psychoanalysis has produced. The reference to Greek tragedy, with its ritual reenactments of the actions of ancient royalty, can be misleading. For psychoanalysis tells a very modern and very bourgeois tale. Freud's Oedipal theory was a search for the inner

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logic of the middle-class male's socialization into heterosexuality, marriage, and vocation.

Freud's own life-history and its historical context were at the very origin of Oedipal theory. The basic concepts of psychoanalysis, including the rudiments of the "father-complex," were discovered in the course of the self-analysis whose traces Freud left in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As Carl E. Schorske showed in his classic essay "Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*," Freud's autobiographical self-reflection also reveals the "flight from politics" that marked Freud's painful shift from his youthful aspiration to politics as vocation to a safer, more sober decision in favor of science as vocation. He abandoned his plans to study law and eventually entered the medical profession instead.¹

His dreams are shot through with images of political heroism in which he or his father struggles against the conservatism of the Habsburgs in the name of German, Hungarian, and Italian nationalisms. The dreamed hero also triumphs over anti-Semitism. In the 1890s anti-Semitism was on the rise. Karl Lueger's anti-Semitic party won elections in Vienna, and there was anti-Jewish violence in Galicia. Many Jewish intellectuals, including Freud himself, encountered intensifying obstacles to their advancement in Austrian academic and professional positions. Freud encountered the "blocked ascendance" that Alvin Gouldner has identified as the motive that has historically driven intellectuals to become revolutionaries.²

The choice of science over politics changed the scene of his revolutionary ambitions. The phrase Freud chose from the *Aeneid* for the epigraph of *The Interpretation of Dreams* registered the displacement triumphantly: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* (If I cannot bend the higher powers, I will stir up the river Acheron [my translation]),—that is, I will stir up hell, the demonic, the unconscious.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who witnessed the general breakup of liberalism at the end of the century, the young Freud did not repudiate his liberal father's beliefs. Instead, he sought, Schorske writes, "to overcome his father by realizing the liberal creed his father professed but had failed to defend" (PP 191). Freud's long unhealed wound at the hand of his father was not some primal paternal castration threat but rather the dismay he felt as a child upon hearing his father tell of being bullied. He recounted the episode, which had figured in his self-analysis, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

"A Christian came up to me and with a single blow knocked off my cap into the mud and shouted: 'Jew! Get off the pavement!'" "And what did

you do?" I asked. "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap" was his quiet reply. This struck me as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father . . . made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans.³

Karl Lueger, Rome, Austrian aristocracy, the Catholic Church, and the Habsburg regime do not disappear as antagonists to Freud's values and aims, but through his interpretation of his dreams he manages to transform them into merely the setting for the supposedly more fundamental antagonism of son and father. He then completes this intellectual maneuver by making the father the source of political and social power: "the father is the oldest, first, and for children the only authority, and from his autocratic power the other social authorities have developed in the course of the history of human civilization" (*ID* 217n).

The preeminence of the father as a symbol of authority and power takes the place of the real-life father with his unheroic submission to injustice and humiliation. By the same token, in the other register of Freud's imagination, he had transformed his own scientific vocation and his discovery of the unconscious—including the rudiments of the Oedipus complex—into acts of rebellion and retribution. "Patricide replaces politics," according to Schorske (PP 197). "By reducing his own political past and present," writes Schorske, "to an epiphenomenal status in relation to the primal conflict between father and son, Freud gave his fellow liberals an a-historical theory of man and society that could make bearable a political world spun out of orbit and beyond control" (PP 203).

Turning the tables on Freud is never that easy. Schorske himself is caught square in a very Freudian paradox. For he argues his claim that Freud replaced political explanations with psychological ones by advancing, precisely, psychological rather than political explanations. Nevertheless, Schorske's reassessment has the virtue of not refuting the Freudian project so much as disclosing how it aims at something beyond what Freud would, or could, actually articulate. The biographical revisionism points up the need for a theoretical reconstruction as well. Moreover, it would be wrong to conclude that Freud's family, vocation, and politics were merely limitations on his thinking. These concrete circumstances were also its enabling conditions. Ultimately, my aim is to ask: How did Freud use conceptions of the family and the psyche to think out the historical processes that were transforming the forms of *community*

and *polis* at the turn of the century? To what extent are Freud's concepts a mere rewriting of social and political processes in psychological terms? To what extent are they a discovery, however partial, of new forms of individuality accompanying new forms of sociality?

II

Carole Pateman has done much to rescue Freud's forays into anthropology and history from the obscurity they might deserve on account of their sheer inaccuracy—and from the astounding prestige they have enjoyed on account of structuralism. *Totem and Taboo* (1912–13), *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) focus on ancient and prehistoric societies, but they actually embody, according to Pateman, Freud's very relevant reflection on modern society. He draws the conceptual and narrative resources of this reflection, Pateman argues, from the tradition of social contract theory. His political fiction of origins surpasses other theories of the social contract by revealing what they systematically hide: namely, that a fundamental subordination of women by men lies behind the supposed founding moment of society in an agreement among equals. Male sex-right, in other words, precedes fraternal equality.

The Freudian story of the primal horde—of the rebellious sons who killed the tyrannical father to end his exclusive control over all the women of the horde and then created the rules that outlawed murder, guaranteed the just distribution of women among all the males, and honored the dead father with idealizing symbols—this story may seem infinitely removed from the preoccupations of modernity. But modern society becomes Freud's real referent as soon as he takes up the task of explaining relations of equality established through an agreement upon rules. Like the social contract stories, Freud's primal horde story furnishes the backing for the kinds of equality associated with the economic, the legal, and the political institutions of capitalism and the liberal state. His analysis is really designed to explain present-day society, but is projected into the remote past as a narrative of origin.

Pateman credits Freud with giving the story of the emergence of civil society its true starting point. Fraternity is born with the subjugation of women. "The motive for the brothers' collective act," she writes, "is not merely to claim their natural liberty and right of self-government, but to *gain access to women*. . . . No man can be

a primal father ever again, but by setting up rules that give all men equal access to women (compare their equality before the laws of the state) they exercise the 'original' political right of dominion over women that was once the prerogative of the father."⁴ Even as social contract theorists challenged the justifications of absolute monarchy modeled on paternal authority, they left unchallenged the father-husband's rule. They interpreted it as a natural rather than political power. Contract theorists, like their antagonists the patriarchalists, asserted "first, that women (wives), unlike sons, were born and remained naturally subject to men (husbands); and, second, that the right of men over women was *not political*" (FSC 39).

Freud provides Pateman with the needed representation or mapping of the two domains of sociality that contract theory separated: the family and civil society. Pateman points out that what Freud meant by "civilization" is what she means by "civil society": "The fraternal social contract creates a new, modern patriarchal order that is presented as divided into two spheres: civil society or the universal sphere of freedom, equality, individualism, reason, contract and impartial law—the realm of men or 'individuals'; and the private world of particularity, natural subjection, laws of blood, emotion, love and sexual passion—the world of women, in which men also rule" (FSC 43). And indeed Freud's conception of "civilization" is at once broad in scope, covering labor and material culture, legal institutions and the state, cultural and ethical ideals; and distinctively modern in that the forms of equality he connects to the fraternal pact are those of the capitalist market, liberal jurisprudence, and the constitutional state.

By the time Freud refined this version of the social contract in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, his Oedipal theory had acquired its achieved form. It was ready for use in those speculative exercises of applied psychoanalysis through which he read out complex historical processes and social institutions as libidinal economy. Like Pateman, I consider these exercises to be attempts on Freud's part to think out political and social questions in psychoanalytic categories. Such a reading has to begin by following out the movement of Freud's explicit claims regarding archaic societies or civilization in the abstract. His real referent can only be gained through a twist in the more immanent reading. Let us turn, then, to Freud's own terms.

Communal life as such, he postulates, has "a two-fold foundation: the compulsion to work, which was created by external necessity, and the power of love."⁵ He proceeds on the basis of an axiom whose iron-clad gender roles he is at once exposing and naturalizing:

“the power of love . . . made the man unwilling to be deprived of his sexual object—the woman—and made the woman unwilling to be deprived of the part of herself which had been separated off from her—her child” (*CD* 101). The elemental form of sociality, therefore, combines the male desire to keep control over a woman for purposes of sexual gratification and the female desire to keep watch over her child.

Men’s heterosexual desire and women’s maternal love founded the sociality of the family. Civilization then developed not only by proliferating families but also by progressively distinguishing itself from the family. This does not, however, imply that civilization arises solely from the other anthropological foundation Freud identified, that is, the necessity to labor in concert. Love, too, builds civilization, but only in the guise of male desire. Men’s sensual love leads them to find a mate and create new families, while their “aim-inhibited love” devotes itself to the whole range of sublimated attachments from friendships to a devotion to cultural or ethical ideals. Male desire divides, to use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s terms, into its homosocial and its heterosexual forms.⁶ Freud credits both with enhancing civilization. Women’s maternal love, however, hardly leads them further into civilization than their participation in the heterosexual couple; maternal love is otherwise what puts the family “in opposition to civilization,” since it cements the family attachments that discourage family members from venturing “into the wider circle of life” (*CD* 103). In Freud’s view, the evolution of civilization has steadily sharpened the sexual division of labor; men have become ever more extensively and exclusively preoccupied with civilization rather than family. “Thus the woman finds herself,” Freud proclaims, “forced into the background by the claims of civilization and she adopts a hostile attitude towards it” (*CD* 104).

Freud’s mapping of the differentiation of family and civil society and their interaction is thus complete. He attributes the building of civilization to male homosocial desire; he attributes the civilizing reproduction of families to the combined power of male heterosexual desire and maternal love; and he attributes the conflict between family and civil society to the “retarding and restraining influence” (*CD* 103) of maternal love alone.

The libidinal economy of the family and civil society also turns out to trace the ideal path of male socialization. The son at first lives wholly within “the mode of life which is phylogenetically the older” (*CD* 103) to which he is attached by the bonds of maternal love. Growth will follow a trajectory beyond these bonds, as the

little boy, under the pressure of the father's authority within the family circle itself, undergoes the splitting of his love into the homosocial and the heterosexual and, finally, under the impact of his complete individuation, becomes suited for vocation and marriage, that is, the roles which civil society and the family, respectively, demand of him. The cluster of childhood experiences that Freud considered crucial to the realization of this ideal defines the so-called positive Oedipus complex and its dissolution.

From the standpoint of Freud's intellectual career, these various mappings—civil society and family; male socialization; Oedipus—came in a particular chronological order. Oedipal theory emerged first, though fragmentedly and slowly, and with it a tacit model of male socialization, and then later Freud applied the model in works like *Civilization and Its Discontents* to society writ large. But the primacy accorded the psychological concepts is deceiving. As Schorske's interpretation suggests, Freud forged the initial psychoanalytic categories out of the political experiences of his generation as they impinged on his own social aspirations and vocation. And, as Pateman's interpretation suggests, a whole tradition of political thought furnishes the impetus and terms of Freud's conceptualization of the family as well as his distillation of the gender roles that underpin psychoanalytic theory. Freud is caught up in that political discourse's imperatives from the outset, in particular the imperative of explaining and justifying the specifically modern form of patriarchy. It makes some sense, therefore, to consider Freud's thought a social thinking that was always shuttling back and forth between his mappings of civil society and the family and his mappings of the Oedipus complex.

III

These mappings suggest a way of looking at the kind of life-history that becomes exemplary for psychoanalysis without, however, taking up the psychoanalyst's own starting point in the clinical picture presented by that life-history. Rather than starting with the symptoms, enumerated and categorized through the therapist's medicalized lens, let's use the Freudian map to ask, instead: What are the crises, the stumbling blocks, the sources of suffering, that create this life-history's unsolved problems and unfinished tasks? The question is certainly relevant to Freud's self-analysis and his case history of the Rat Man, both of which contributed so crucially to the making of Oedipal theory.

Like Freud, the Rat Man was the son of a businessman who had made the great transition from rural life in a Jewish village to secular, commercial life in the city. The sons did not follow their fathers' footsteps into commerce, but pursued professions. Neither Freud's father nor the Rat Man's reproduced his own religious upbringing in his son's life. Another son who had experienced how this generational divide made it impossible for the shape of his own life to equal his father's wrote: "It was much the same with a large section of this transitional generation of Jews, which had migrated from the still comparatively devout countryside to the cities. It happened automatically; only it added to our relationship, which certainly did not lack in acrimony, one more sufficiently painful source."⁷ Like Freud and the Rat Man, this beleaguered son, a contemporary of the Rat Man's, was a child of the Habsburg empire. I have quoted from Franz Kafka's "Letter to His Father." For Kafka, as for Freud and the Rat Man, the watersheds of maturity were marriage and vocation, science for Freud and law for the Rat Man and Kafka. Like the Rat Man, Kafka faltered at both. His sparsely narrated life-history discloses the pressures that shape or interrupt or distort the path of male socialization as it traverses and connects the social spaces of family and civil society.

Kafka's "Letter to His Father" was written in 1919 when he was thirty-six. It was never delivered, except to his mother. The letter painfully and painstakingly reveals how the son's response to his father's authority, marriage, and vocation snuffed out his own capacity to value a vocation and ruined his own plans to marry. Kafka had been stopped dead in his tracks on the path of socialization. "I fled everything that even remotely reminded me of you," he writes. "First, the business" (135). He had acquired a double perception of his father's vocation, corresponding to the two-sided role of the dry goods wholesaler: he was an entrepreneur whose "magnificent commercial talents" and decisiveness his son admired, and he was the employer who despised and terrorized his employees, "shouting, cursing, and raging in the shop." Young Kafka acquired a sense of injustice at the store, but at the same moment his impulse to rebel in the name of justice was destroyed: "You called the employees 'paid enemies,' and that is what they were, but even before they became that, you seemed to me to be their 'paying enemy.' There, too, I learned the great lesson you could be unjust; in my own case I would not have noticed it so soon, for there was much accumulated sense of guilt in me ready to admit that you were right. . . . it made the business insufferable to me, reminding me far too much of my relations with you" (136-37). In becoming

the imaginary class enemy of his father, he lost his hold on business as vocation; yet, confronted with a tyrant whose paternal recognition he nonetheless craved, he did not rebel but merely became ever more convinced of his own inadequacy: "you must, as I assumed, in the same way be forever dissatisfied with me too" (137).

Cut off from any expectation of his father's approval, he let his schoolwork and then his own choice of vocation become "a matter of indifference to me." "And so it was a matter of finding," he wrote, "a profession that would let me indulge this indifference without injuring my vanity too much. Law was the obvious choice" (154). Kafka's devotion to the law as vocation never got beyond his undistinguished position in the bureaucracy of a workers' insurance company.

While Kafka settled into the bare satisfactions of a vocation that allowed him to balance his indifference to social achievement against his remaining shreds of bourgeois self-esteem, he attained no such heights when it came to his marriage plans. His broken engagements to Felice Bauer, twice, and to Milena Jesenska were catastrophic proof of his failing at life. Marriage possessed a supreme value for Kafka: "Marrying, founding a family, accepting all the children that come, supporting them in this insecure world and perhaps even guiding them a little, is, I am convinced, the utmost a human being can succeed in doing" (156). This valuation led Kafka to desire and fear marriage with equal intensity.

Although his father had undermined the engagements by belittling the women Kafka chose and mocking Kafka's feeling for them, he does not blame his failings on the father's opposition. Instead, he uncovers a paradox in his own desires and aspirations, as they are mediated through his esteem for his father. For when he let himself imagine becoming a husband, it not only gratified a cultural ideal but also held out the utopian prospect of achieving parity with his father: "I picture this equality which would then arise between us . . . as so beautiful because then I could be a free, grateful, guiltless, upright son, and you could be an untroubled, untyrannical, sympathetic, contented father" (162). But "so much cannot be achieved," he laments, and dismisses his vision as a "fairy tale." He does not, however, then cast off this utopian expectation. On the contrary, he lets marriage recede beyond his reach because the equality of father and son seems unattainable. Why should he arrive at this bitter and yet absurd impasse? In part, of course, because of his virtually inexplicable lack of rebelliousness. But his own explanation looks elsewhere.

The uncanny lucidity characteristic of the "Letter to His Father"

deserts Kafka when he turns to explain why the aspiration to be like his father has ultimately ruined the marriage plan which would indeed make him like his father:

marrying is barred to me because it is your very own domain. . . . In your marriage I had before me what was, in many ways, a model marriage, a model in constancy, mutual help, number of children; and even when the children grew up and increasingly disturbed the peace, the marriage as such remained undisturbed. Perhaps I formed my high idea of marriage on this model: the desire for marriage was powerless for other reasons. Those lay in your relation to your children, which is, after all, what this whole letter is about. (163)

This passage does not gel with all that one gleans about the marriage from the "Letter to His Father" as well as Kafka's diaries and letters. All these virtues of constancy and helpfulness, as well as the burdens of the family's size and of restoring the peace the children disturbed, were the hallmarks not of the marriage but of Kafka's mother.

His attitude toward *her* adherence to these virtues, however, was hardly affirmative. A few pages earlier he saw in her kindness and desire for harmony the very instrument that destroyed his own ability to rebel against his father. Addressing his father, the harsh disciplinarian, he wrote: "Even if your method of upbringing might in some unlikely case have set me on my own feet by means of producing defiance, dislike, or even hate in me, Mother canceled that out again by kindness, by talking sensibly, . . . by pleading for me; and I was driven back into your orbit" (132). Kafka achieves his idealization of marriage by taking those traits of his parents' marriage which he inadvertently reveals are his mother's contribution and attributing them to his father's power. The basis, therefore, for his identification with his father and the source of his valorization of the role of husband are precisely the father's power. His rule is what makes him, rather than the mother, the author of the marriage. Kafka identifies with his father *in his power*. "When the primal horde gives way to kinship and marriage," Pateman remarks, "the father's legacy of sex-right is shared equally among all the brothers."⁸ It is this legacy of sex-right that Kafka covets, but he cowers at the thought of exercising it because he fears his real-life father. Lacan is certainly right to trace Oedipal pathologies to the dissonance the son experiences in apprehending his father as both a real-life individual like himself (a potential equal) *and* the representative of fatherhood itself. What is missing in Lacan, however, is the sense, so vivid here, that this very discrepancy feeds on the real-life father's double role as head of the household, where his sex-right *is* the

basis of his tyranny, and as the bourgeois or citizen whom the son might encounter as an equal. It is his real-life power in the private sphere that supports his symbolic function. The partriarchal tyranny Kafka fled in the dry goods store he craves in his ideal of marriage. There is nothing paradoxical in this. Marriage promises him a masculinity and power like his father's—until he renounces it as a fairy tale that his weakness does not permit him to hope for. The pathologies of the Oedipus complex are pathologies of patriarchal power.

IV

Woven into the life-histories Freud typically encountered was the dense web of social relationships in which the family and its members participate. From these social relationships, Freud distilled the Oedipal triangle. He eschewed the questions of gender, community, and power at play in the family and its links to civil society and the polis. They became, at most, the backlighting of the Oedipal scene. Faced with the typical pathologies of modernity, the stumbling blocks and unsolved problems in men's and women's life-histories, Freud looked through the medical lens to define symptomologies solely with reference to the individual as an organism, never as participant in social and political relations.

Social and political relations are regulated by norms, and they require justifications and often evoke challenges. Freud's medicalizing, psychologizing stance apparently sidestepped the thorny problem of legitimating or criticizing norms and practices. Nevertheless, the clinical terrain he marked out itself still needed some kind of normative order against which to read the individual psyche's symptoms. What would a nonpathological outcome of the Oedipus complex really look like? Just as Freud's account of Oedipal pathologies diverted the elements of social diagnosis and cultural critique into a purely psychological symptomology, he responded to the need to imagine a resolution or healing of Oedipal pathologies by projecting a psychological norm: a dissolution of the Oedipus complex.

This concept was not, however, readily available to Freud. It had to be wrenched from a confusing array of clinical experiences. Moreover, I am suggesting that this search for a psychological norm tacitly forced Freud to register the social and political relationships at play in the formation of the Oedipus complex. He therefore continued to refine Oedipal theory until it yielded a coherent conception of the dissolution as well as the formation of the Oedipus complex. The story of the pathogenic family drama had to be

matched with a story of the individual male's resolution of its conflicts. It was not until *The Ego and the Id* (1923) and "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924) that Freud found an adequate formulation for the Oedipus complex's resolution, even though he had steadily pushed the Oedipus complex to the center of his theory of neurosis for two decades, gradually universalizing its role in psychosexual development.

As it turns out, the dissolution of the Oedipus complex—as opposed to its merely more or less unsuccessful repression—requires, first, that it be initially formed along the lines of the "simple positive Oedipus complex," that is, in the heterosexual form where the little boy has an erotic attachment to his mother and a (desexualized) identification with his father. Freud had in fact come to the conclusion that "a strong innate bisexual disposition becomes one of the preconditions or reinforcements of neurosis."⁹ Lacking a notion of what Adrienne Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality," Freud misses the political interpretation this hypothesis suggests.¹⁰ The simple positive Oedipus complex enjoys a privilege by virtue of the fact that it lies on the path to male-dominated heterosexuality: its every manifestation and nuance is socially validated and rewarded. The normative outcome it promises is nothing more than the coercive appeal it holds in an overwhelmingly homophobic and male-dominated lifeworld.

Once the Oedipus complex is appropriately formed, it can then be utterly dissolved, without any repressed residue, only if the son's rivalrous hatred of his father and his erotic attachment to his mother each end in a particular way. As regards the father, the route for the son to follow is already laid down by the heterosexual imperative. "What makes hatred of the father unacceptable is *fear* of the father; castration is terrible, whether as a punishment or as the price of love. Of the two factors which repress hatred of the father," Freud writes in "Dostoevsky and Parricide," "the first, the direct fear of punishment and castration, may be called the normal one; its pathogenic intensification seems to come only with the addition of the second factor, the fear of the feminine attitude" (DP 184). As regards the mother in the simple positive Oedipus complex, the son's fear of castration is the motive for abandoning his erotic attachment. But what then is the fate of this love? "Its place may be filled by one of two things: either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. We are accustomed to regard the latter outcome as the more normal; it permits the affectionate relation to the mother to be in a measure retained. In this way the dissolution of the Oedipus complex would consolidate

the masculinity in a boy's character."¹¹ Here then is Freud's real man. He is required, in sum, to have a weak bisexual disposition; he should abandon his hatred of his father out of fear rather than love; and, when he abandons his love for his mother in the face of the father's castration threats, he should end up identifying less with her than him. The only reassurance here is that, according to Freud, few ever attain this ideal!

The castration complex is the key to each moment of this ideal progress. But it is hard to see exactly how the castration complex can work very well in practice when it is so confused in theory. Lacanianism's elaborate distinction between the penis and phallus notwithstanding, the Freudian castration complex amounts to the notion that children's understanding of sexual difference comes down to their perception—judgment really—of having-a-penis-or-not. Freud's greater stress on bisexuality in the finalized version of Oedipal theory does not ultimately mitigate against this phallogocentrism, since it is accompanied by his unwavering reference to the so-called "anatomical difference of the sexes." In fact, bisexuality and having-a-penis-or-not are closely linked concepts in the later Freud.

By bisexuality Freud sometimes meant that children's erotic wishes and love could be directed at men and boys or women and girls, and he sometimes meant that gratification could come through either active or passive aims (seeing/being seen, swallowing/being swallowed, and so forth). In taking these senses of bisexuality into Oedipal theory, Freud introduced two questionable assumptions. First, he regards an "active" sexual aim as *masculine* (or inevitably or completely encoded as *masculine*), while a "passive" sexual aim is *feminine* (or is inevitably or completely encoded as *feminine*). Second, he believes the male child is constrained to picture himself in an *active* and hence *masculine* role with his mother, and a *passive* and hence *feminine* role with his father. Add to this that both *active/passive* and *masculine/feminine* are deemed to straightforwardly correspond to having-a-penis-or-not, and the apparently radical notion of innate bisexuality is completely assimilated to the whole Oedipal regime of compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance.

The phallic equations are in fact all that Freud has to make sense of the simple positive Oedipus complex, its formation, and dissolution. Consider the fear of castration associated with the little boy's erotic attachment to his father, that is, the notion that he discovers that he would have to lose his penis to have intercourse with his father: since *father* = *masculine* = *active*, he himself would therefore become *passive* = *feminine* = *castrated*. Inversely, the consequence

of having intercourse with his mother would be a punishment in the form of losing his penis, since *mother* = *passive* = *castrated*, making him *active* = *masculine* = *having-a-penis*.

All the basic equations are anchored in having-a-penis-or-not. But by Freud's own accounts the requisite "recognition" of castration, that is, the judgment that the "one thing" that makes women different from men is that they do not have a penis, is acquired only very late in the socialization process. If that is the case, then the elaborate emotional, libidinal relationships the child has with his mother and father, with other adults male and female, and with other children, are obviously webs of passive and active erotic aims that have not been divvied up according to the phallic equations.

In a culture which produces images, symbols, narratives, jokes, and slogans laden with these phallic equations, it is surely safe to assume that their impact will be a crucial part of male socialization, perhaps congealing in a more or less dramatic way in certain experiences or crises. But what is that impact? Freud's emergent ideal of male socialization—that is, the positively formed, completely dissolved Oedipus complex—would suggest that the impact of the phallic equations is mental health itself. This precisely ignores their belatedness and inadequacy in representing the wealth of relationships in which the child has participated. The phallic equations have to recode and recalibrate the intricacies of passive and active sexual aims, the love for same-sex and different-sex playmates, parents, relatives. Wouldn't it make more sense to expect the reign of the phallic equations to be a kind of catastrophe that befalls the layers of uncertain, remembered, ill-named experience? Contrary to Freud's hypothesis, shouldn't we suspect that the acceptance of phallocentrism delivers such a blow to the weave of passivity and activity that you can fall ill?

Freud's definition of health has to be turned upside down. What is pathogenic is the inadequacy of the simple positive Oedipus complex to represent erotic and emotional life. It is not merely a theoretical misrepresentation. When Freud suggests that the simple positive Oedipus complex "represents a simplification or schematization" (33), he inadvertently points up the crucial unsolved question. For this is at once a theoretical and a social schematization.

The simple positive Oedipus complex is a social schematization in the sense that it is the distilled form of the models, directives, stories, values, and so on through which our society tells the male child that he must grow up to be masculine and heterosexual in the ways valued by that society. The culture furnishes individuals with a construct for interpreting their relationships in keeping with

the norms of compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance. This construct is the Oedipus complex viewed as a social schematization of experience, a disposition, a structure of feeling. The norms embodied in this construct are not the equivalent of the incest taboo; they operate a particular code upon it: I must not want my father, *because* he is a man. I must not want my mother, *because* she *belongs* to my father. I look beyond loving my mother out of fear rather than identification. I identify with my father rather than my mother because I aspire to his power. I identify with him rather than want to love him because I aspire to masculinity.

As a theoretical schematization, the simple positive Oedipus complex simplifies the child's multifarious attachments to this one heterosexual drama in an attempt to explain how the so-called bisexual male child, filled with contradictory ideas about the salient differences between his parents, uncertain of his own or others' gender, and, *pace* Freud, rife with passive and active sexual aims toward both parents, reemerges on the other side of latency and adolescence merely a more or less neurotic heterosexual. The theoretical schematization plainly fails in this task. Even when Freud declared that the ideal was seldom if ever attained, he did not reinterrogate its claim to normativity but simply retreated to his theme that the undifferentiated process of civilization exacts impossible demands on the human organism.

V

Since Freud does not see that the Oedipal structure of feeling derives from specific social practices and cultural forms—compulsory heterosexuality, male dominance, patriarchal symbols, male fantasy—he does not acknowledge that the norms embodied in this structure are in need of moral-political justification. Nor of course does he acknowledge that those norms, particularly the phallic equations, are open to challenge. Even though the Oedipal schematization anchors an entire process of socialization and individuation, it appears to Freud beyond the pale of political reflection. He does, however, tacitly acknowledge that the phallic equations require a theoretical explanation. For they have to come from somewhere. Freud responds by producing another round of origin stories. I refer now not to the primal horde but to the primal scene. Following a pattern we have seen before, Freud's effort to furnish a theoretical explanation for an apparently psychological question will lead him

covertly to engage the moral-political justifications used to legitimate specific social and cultural practices.

Freud gave his fullest account of primal scenes in the context of postulating that they most typically were not memories of actual events but rather fantasies whose “psychical reality” was just as decisive as it would be if they also had a “material reality.” Freud enumerates the most prominent of these fantasies “in the youthful history of neurotics” as follows: “observation of parental intercourse, seduction by an adult and threat of being castrated.”¹² The seduction scenes are most closely associated with Freud’s women patients. When he decided to discount the stories he had been told early in his career by young women who had been molested in their childhood, usually by their father, he recast actual manifestations of abusive father-right into the Oedipal fantasy of girls’ longing to marry their fathers. Male dominance became a female fantasy, but for that very reason all the more “real” in the sense of “psychical reality,” and all the more legitimate and justified in social reality for being no longer an actual father’s crime.

The primal scene of parental intercourse and the threat of castration, on the other hand, are the necessary props to the male Oedipus complex. The primal scene presents the child with a view of sexual intercourse in which the *father* is *active* and the *mother* is *passive*. Freud never wavers from his conviction that this is exactly how the child comprehends the sexual act. In fact, it goes beyond *active/passive*. The father performs an act of aggression against the mother. The primal scene is a rape. The phallic equation *father* = *masculine* = *active* is linked to an act of domination. The subjection of women is folded into the culturally validated representation of masculinity and its power.

According to the Freudian scenario, the father’s violence next turns threateningly on the male child himself in the primal threats of castration. Because Freud always construes castration in terms of anatomy, he misses the fact, as feminists as varied as Simone de Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell, and Luce Irigaray have demonstrated, that having-a-penis acquires its special value because it “stands for” something valuable: prestige, privilege, power, property, and so on. By the same token, the reason these goods get symbolized by having-a-penis is because they are monopolized by men. In having recourse to the anatomical distinction of the sexes, Freud hides and naturalizes this nexus of social relations between men and women.

There is another striking feature of the primal scenes. Unlike the seduction scenes, which were reported as actual events but construed by Freud as fantasies, the primal scenes of parental

intercourse and castration threats were seldom remembered at all. In fact, his patients did not advance them as memories *or* as fantasies. Wherever Freud delved into a scene of parental intercourse it was inevitably because he was pressing this vision of the sexual act on his patient as a “construction.”¹³ The fact that these constructions frequently proved efficacious in the therapy, clarifying the vicissitudes of the patient’s symptoms and development, bolstered Freud in his conviction that these “events” were the product of the patient’s unconscious memory or fantasy.

There is, I believe, a more viable hypothesis to account for why Freud’s constructions were so compelling. The primal scenes provide an origin for the psychic representation of the phallic equations, *masculine = active, feminine = passive*. Masculinity is fused with images of female subordination and male sexual dominance. These representations, I have argued, do not arrive at an appointed hour in the socialization process. They seep into it through the cultural forms the individual takes up to interpret and normalize his desires and his identity. They are certainly not full-blown representations in infantile experience at all. They always arrive belatedly, sometimes catastrophically.

From the standpoint of the therapy’s progress, the primal scenes supply the missing representation that links infantile with adult sexuality. From the standpoint of the individual’s psychosexual development, they crystalize the cultural forms that have recoded remembered and fantasized experience retrospectively, on the model of the *Nachträglichkeit*, the delayed effect or retrodetermination. From the standpoint of the lifeworld, the primal scenes are a stylization of the structure of feeling that continually links the individual’s life-history and the social-symbolic world he inhabits.

Freud’s construction of these primal scenes plays the same role for the patient in therapy as the social contract story plays in politics. It represents the several elements of complex social relationships as though they were all created in a single action whose intentions and meanings it renders intelligible. An existing state of affairs is illuminated as though from the inside, aglow with coherence and purposiveness. But just there is the fatal flaw of origin stories and primal scenes. Their extraordinary power to justify—or criticize—some lived set of social and political relationships is purchased at a great cost in historical understanding.

Pateman offers an interpretation of the Freudian primal scene that unveils its social and political significance. The representation of parental intercourse as rape reflects the deep-seated ambiguity that political, legal, and cultural norms have created regarding

women's consent in sexual activity and in political activity. The child's fantasy flourishes in the politically significant zone of ambiguity where "there is widespread lack of ability to understand what consensual intercourse is."¹⁴ In the politically structured relations of men and women, coerciveness is blended into ostensibly consensual interactions.

Pateman's critical reassessment of the social contract stories itself runs up against some of the same limits as the Freudian primal scene. The ambiguities and unanswered questions created by her appropriation of origin stories deserve reflection. Pateman's mapping of the family and civil society identifies the salient components in that complex of social and political relationships which she aptly calls modern patriarchal society: (1) private and public spheres are separated according to gender; (2) women are excluded from participation in civil society and are subordinated within its various institutions; and (3) masculine sex-right underlies and sustains the husband-father's real power within the family. The origin story Pateman deconstructs and reconstructs represents these various elements as though they were created by a single set of actions. They thereby become somehow more intelligible, grasped in a bold single stroke, but this newfound intelligibility raises other questions.

When Pateman takes over the Freudian primal scene to represent the origins of male sex-right and paternal power, she ends up having to puzzle out a new mystery. For she is led to ask, Did men subjugate women at the origin for the sake of sexual possession and power, or in order to create and control offspring? Pateman endorses the former position but to make good on her choice she is driven to draw on the speculative excesses of Gregory Zilboorg:

Mother-right was overthrown when, "one day [a man] became sufficiently conscious and sure of his strength to overpower the woman, to rape her." Taking issue with all the stories in which men's discovery of paternity is the driving force that institutes the patriarchal family and civilization, Zilboorg speculates that the primordial deed had nothing to do with paternity; "the act was not that of love and of anticipated fatherhood, nor of tender solicitude. . . . It was an assault. . . . It was a phallic, sadistic act."

Zilboorg argues that the original deed was prompted purely by "the need to possess and master." The subjugation of women provided the example required to enable men to extend their possession and mastery beyond their immediate needs. (107)¹⁵

Here's the problem: there are no grounds for accepting this interpretation over the alternative. Moreover, like all origin stories, Pateman's has to presuppose one of the things it had to explain. In projecting that men in the beginning took sexual possession of women for the sake of dominance, the story presupposes heterosexuality. But compulsory heterosexuality is another element of our current social order in need of illumination and critique.

And, finally, the origins of the politically structured confusion of consent and coercion are pictured as a purely coercive act performed by a male agent on a female victim; at the origin of the confusions over consent and coercion there is no confusion of consent and coercion, because the origin story expunges all forms of consent. It thereby fails to explain the very thing it was designed to explain. Moreover, women's agency, including their long history of resistance and opposition to male dominance, has no place in the representation itself. There is no female agency on the scene where women are said, primordially, to participate. The supposed scene of political origins is "over there" where female agency does not exist; consequently, women's agency, in the sense of a feminist politics devoted to overcoming coercion and remaking consent, remains unrepresented at the origins.

The radical-feminist gesture Pateman deploys goes insightfully to the root of modern patriarchal society, enumerating the many-sided forms of female subordination in modern social and political institutions. But in simultaneously setting up its critical standpoint outside the structures it criticizes, it loses touch with the actual processes of political change. Pateman sets radical critique against liberal critique, rather than looking to extend the liberal critique in the radical:

The history of liberal feminism is the history of the attempts to generalize liberal liberties and rights to the whole adult population; but liberal feminism does not, and cannot, come to grips with the deeper problem of *how* women are to take an equal place in the patriarchal civil order.

Now that the feminist struggle has reached the point where women are almost formal civil equals, the opposition is highlighted between equality made after a male image and the real social position of women *as women*. (FSC 51)

Such a thesis overstates the completedness of the liberal project and so underestimates its continuing relevance. Moreover, it does not fully appreciate how radical feminism builds upon the political gains of liberal feminism. Historically, it has been the panoply of reforms in women's political rights and economic roles and the penetration

of civil and criminal law into the male-dominated household that have enabled a critique of the gendered division of social and political space. We must be prepared to radicalize reforms and rights rather than transcending them.

Pateman is right to open a new path of political criticism by interrogating the mapping of society derived from social contract theory. Accordingly, the division of public and private on the axis of “civil society” and the “family” becomes for her the decisive terrain for a critique designed to cut to the bone of the social structure. However, Pateman too often slides into the view that the mapping and critique she develops produce the only politically relevant conception of civil society. While it is the mission of radical critique to go to the root, as Pateman surely does in showing how sex oppression pervades modern political life, the inequalities and injustices of contemporary societies have more than one root. Radical critique always needs to guard against projecting a single explanation of oppression and injustice. Put another way, there are politically relevant criticisms of our society’s institutions which require other mappings, different conceptions of civil society, and other avenues of critique.

VI

When Pateman sets forth the sense of civil society she deems relevant to feminism, she brushes aside an important alternative. This other mapping of modern society was developed by Hegel and distinguishes private and public on the axis of civil society and the state. While the Hegelian mapping may well obscure the path of feminist critique, it has at the same time illuminated the way for significant critiques of state socialism, on the one hand, and of the impact of imperialism on non-Western societies, on the other.

Should civil society be defined in opposition to the family or in opposition to the state? Pateman has no doubts that the force of the first definition has been in the course of Western political history the more relevant for the issues that concern feminism. In the following passage, she gives a cogent account of the alternatives, while asserting her thesis on behalf of understanding civil society as the public realm set off against the private realm of the family:

The meaning of “civil society” in the contract stories, and as I am using it here, is constituted through the “original” separation and opposition between the modern, public—civil—world and the modern, private or conjugal and familial sphere: that is, in the new social world created through

contract, everything that lies beyond the domestic (private) sphere is public, or “civil,” society. Feminists are concerned with *this* division. In contrast, most discussions of civil society and such formulations as “public” regulation versus “private” enterprise presuppose that the politically relevant separation between public and private is drawn *within* “civil society” as constructed in the social contract stories. That is to say, “civil society” has come to be used in a meaning closer to that of Hegel, the social contract theorists’ greatest critic, who contrasts the universal, public state with the market, classes and corporations of private, civil society.

Hegel, of course, presents a threefold division between family, civil society, state—but the separation between the family and the rest of social life is invariably “forgotten” in arguments about civil society. The shift in meaning of “civil,” “public” and “private” goes unnoticed because the “original” creation of civil society through the social contract is a patriarchal construction which is also a separation of the sexes. (FSC 34)

The risks of taking the origin story literally are apparent in the last sentence of this passage. Despite the scare-quotes in the phrase “‘original’ creation of civil society,” the separation of public and private which social contract theory represents at the origin of society is taken by Pateman to really be the basis of modern society. But in fact the many-layered social and political relationships that make up the fabric of modern society were not invented whole cloth from just one set of inequalities.

It is true that social contract theory tells a powerful story about the political equality among men by disguising the political oppression of women, and it is true that it simultaneously tries to map the whole of social and political relationships on the public/private, civil society/family axis. Pateman’s immanent critique of this mapping yields a rich vocabulary of feminist political criticism, but the Hegelian model of civil society, family, and state has proved fruitful as well. On the one hand, the threefold distinction points up that the market, the household, and the polis are not ruled by identical norms. And, on the other hand, the Hegelian mapping has itself been the object of immanent critiques that yield yet other valuable political criticisms.

I now want to turn to a recent example of such an immanent critique. It will turn out to bear very directly on Freud and Pateman, even though its own immediate aim is to contest the imposition of Western political thought on non-Western societies. Partha Chatterjee has argued that when Hegel mapped the forms and institutions of social life he was intent on eradicating or subordinating any reference to community in the sense of the various forms of ethnic, religious, or regional belonging that were in fact powerful aspects of social

identity in nineteenth-century Europe. The market called for separated individuals who would act in their own self-interest; the modern nation-state called for subjects and citizens whose group loyalty to the state superseded all other group solidarities. "Civil society," writes Chatterjee, "now became the space for the diverse life of individuals in the nation: the state became the nation's singular representative embodiment, the only legitimate form of community"¹⁶—or, more precisely, I think, the *overriding* form of community.

The imperatives of capitalist development set about to destroy the forms of "pre-capitalist community which, in various forms, had regulated the social unity of laborers with their means of production" (RTI 8). What Marx called the "primitive accumulation" of capital set in motion the real destruction of communities and along with it an ideological revaluation that relegated community to the pre-history of capital, indeed, to the prehistory of modern times in general, and identified it "with medievalism in Europe and the stagnant, backward, undeveloped present in the rest of the world" (RTI 8). The "particularism" of community and communal identity henceforth appears regressive from the vantage of progressive European social thought.

However, capitalism meanwhile remained, "notwithstanding its universalist scope, . . . parasitic upon the reconstructed particularism of the nation" (RTI 8). The nation-state commanded a kind of loyalty that drew on the need for community, while the market gave root to individualistic self-interest. National identity fed on people's subjective capacity for shared feelings and mutual belonging. The market honed their individualism. In Chatterjee's view, nation and capital, polis and market, together set in motion the destruction of community.

Community was never really obliterated, of course, as the upheavals today from Yugoslavia to Central Asia attest. Chatterjee's point is that Western political institutions and forms of political identity are so individualistic and so linked to the "narrative of capital" that they have utterly failed to accommodate communities and forms of communal identity within a meaningful vision of justice, right, and participation. Moreover, imperialism and neo-imperialism have imposed this European model on societies the world over under the fraudulent banner of universalism. The potential for "people, living in different, contextually defined, communities [to] coexist peacefully, productively and creatively within large political units" (RTI 9) in countries like Nigeria or India cannot be realized, according to Chatterjee, on the Western model of individualism and nationalism.¹⁷

On its own local terrain European political thought had to struggle with the survival of forms of community that did not readily boil down in the cauldron of the market and the state. Chatterjee suggestively and insightfully reads Hegel as devising a strategy for containing and overcoming the demands of community. Those attributes of community which are not absorbed into the nation-state Hegel sloughs off onto his account of family.

Consider Hegel's reflection on the meaning of family and love in the *Philosophy of Right* at just the point where he is concerned to establish the qualitative and unbridgeable distinction between the family and the state. The family achieves unity through the feeling of love, which is "ethical life in the form of something natural," in contradistinction to the state, in which "we are conscious of unity as law":

Love means in general terms the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not in selfish isolation but win my self-consciousness only as the renunciation of my independence and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me. . . . The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be a self-subsistent and independent person and that, if I were, then I would feel defective and incomplete. The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I count for something in the other, while the other in turn comes to count for something in me. . . . Love is at once the propounding and the resolving of this contradiction. As the resolving of it, love is unity of an ethical type.

The right of the family consists in the fact that its substantiality should have determinate existence. Thus it is a right against externality and against secessions from the family unity.¹⁸

Chatterjee reads here a deflected narrative of community. "Hegel's arguments on the family remind us," he writes, "of the irreducible immediacy in which human beings are born in society: not as pure unattached individuals free to choose their social affiliations (whether gender, ethnicity or class) but as already-ascribed members of society." He also notes the deep resemblance between Hegel's rhetoric and that "in which, even in this age of the triumph of individualism, all movements which appeal to the 'natural' solidarity of community speak. They claim precisely the right against externality and secession, they seek determinate existence precisely in 'property' and 'representation' through collectively recognized heads, they speak in the language of love and of self-recognition through the free surrender of individual will to others in the community" (RTI 5).

Freud's intellectual inheritance includes just this tendency to eradicate community from the mapping of society. The Hegelian to-

pography of civil society, family, and state reduced the relevant sites of social life to the market, the household, and the polis. The values and attributes associated with community had to be absorbed either into the family or the state; failing that, they had simply to be suppressed. This pattern of thinking Freud shared with Hegel and a whole tradition of social thought from Marx to Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

But the deflection of what Chatterjee calls the “narrative of community” into the narrative of family was not merely an intellectual exercise. For it is also true that the bourgeois family inherited many of the norms and habits, feelings and needs, that had previously structured the religious, ethnic, and regional communities which were breaking up, dispersing, and migrating throughout the nineteenth century. The family was in reality as well as ideology a deflected site of communal identities and desires. The bourgeois household was a complex social space. Its inner relationships were determined by its material and symbolic relation to the market and the polis, and also, more covertly, to community.

The liberal ideals of the nineteenth century foresaw a social world in which *men* were offered precise forms of individuality matched to the market, the family, and the polis: namely, the identities of owner, husband-father, and citizen (or citizen-subject). Liberalism envisioned a stable society whose institutions would centrally serve the realization of just these roles. The decades that stretch from Freud’s birth to his major intellectual crises and theoretical innovations span the period during which Austro-Hungarian liberalism first flourished and triumphed and then floundered and shattered.

In 1857, the year after Freud’s birth, Austro-Hungarian liberals unveiled their plan to rebuild Vienna. Streets, buildings, and parks would fill the massive ring that had always separated the walled city of feudal, dynastic, Catholic Vienna from the suburbs where the lower classes were amassing. As Schorske shows in his study of the Ringstrasse, the liberals projected their ideal self-image into the new architecture and public spaces. The Ringstrasse was a secular city, a large-scale enterprise, a seat of national government, a center of education and the arts. The new Vienna rose up in the very buildings that housed its institutions of democracy, culture, and rational administration.

The liberals built their political identity, including their ideals of citizenship, on their expectation that the male individual would find fulfillment in his roles as owner, father, and citizen. From the 1860s until the 1890s, Austro-Hungarian liberalism thrived on this set of assumptions and expectations. Social and political progress was

envisioned as a peaceful process. The liberals, Germanic and bourgeois, believed their own ideals would be the model and beacon for the other nationalities and the other classes whom they expected to adopt this same style of citizenship and this same cultural identity on the way to becoming fuller partners in the civic enterprise.¹⁹

The expectations proved illusory and shattered in the 1890s. Not only did liberalism never fully liberate the polis from the crown and the Church, but its reforms failed to preempt class conflicts, nationalist and ethnic upheavals, or the rise of right-wing Christian Socialism. When Karl Lueger led his Christian Socialist party to victory in Vienna on an anti-Semitic platform in 1895, liberal ideology was left in shambles. The ideological and political program that had progressed so far in remapping society on the model of civil society, the family, and the state was in crisis.

VII

Austro-Hungarian liberals, including Freud, had to face up to the recognition that the polis they had so assiduously helped to construct was in fact distorted and increasingly fragile. They also faced the fear that their vision of inevitable political equality and social harmony was mere illusion. How should they respond to the unhinging of the political identity that had anchored the liberal bourgeoisie's sense of its mission and of the future? Central European intellectuals—writers, social theorists, psychoanalysts—would in the next few decades attempt to comprehend the confusing pattern of change that had overthrown the cherished ideals of progress.

Freud, in my view, had inherited and deeply adhered to the ideal of individual self-realization that was generally the product of liberal and socialist thinking. The training for citizenship was to hinge, as we have already seen, on the achievements of vocation and marriage. Modern liberal political identity enabled, and reciprocally was reinforced by, men's undisturbed participation in their roles in the market and the family, their autonomous freedom in the market-mediated relations of a capitalist economy and their autocratic power within the household they headed. Citizenship, of course, is never merely a question of the individual's qualities or accomplishments; it also requires political foundations. The polis is not, as the ideal image suggests, the open yet protected space in which all the city's dwellers may gather to debate, deliberate, and decide. It is a structurally distorted space of unequal participation.

The crises that threw into doubt the ability of Austro-Hungarian

liberals to master this political space challenged Freud to make an intellectual and professional response. I don't disagree with Schorske's conclusion that with Oedipal theory "Freud gave his fellow liberals an a-historical theory of man and society that could make bearable a political world spun out of orbit and beyond control" (PP 203). But psychoanalytic theory and practice more actively sought to relocate an arena of mastery. Freud did not choose the family or the household as this arena; he chose, rather, the individual's *representations* of family relationships. His encounters with the autocratic power of fathers and the traumatic illnesses of their daughters had not only led him into crisis over the seduction theory but also made any kind of intervention in actual families seem impossible. Freud turned the "psyche" into that arena in which the relevant pathologies could be identified and their causes isolated. The psychoanalytic dialogue promised to put those pathologies under the individual's control. The problem, its origin, and its cure became the province, once again, of the individual. Freud waded into the ruins of liberal individualism to rescue the individual, seeking to replace the damaged social and political underpinnings with an unprecedented experience of self-reflection and self-expression.

In order to make such inwardness the consistent reference point of the theoretical language and the therapeutic techniques of psychoanalysis, Freud had to cope with the many social and political experiences that arose within the life-histories and the free associations of his patients. Such experiences had to be marginalized, effaced, or absorbed into the Oedipal narrative. Revisionist critics who today want to foreground class or gender or nationality and religion in revaluations of Freud's work have to comb through the detritus of his case histories and his self-analysis, reaccenting the rich testimony of the unconscious to be found there.

Consider the nanny who suddenly reappeared in Freud's dreams during the crucial week he was first tempted to turn from the seduction theory to Oedipal theory. On 3 October 1897, Freud wrote Fliess that "the 'prime originator' [of my troubles] was a woman, ugly, elderly, but clever, who told me a great deal about God Almighty and Hell and who gave me a high opinion of my own capacities."²⁰ This woman, who was Czech and Catholic, had cared for Freud during his first three years, only to be expelled from the household and sent to prison for stealing from the family. "I asked my mother whether she still recollected the nurse," Freud reported to Fliess on October 15. "'Of course,' she said, 'an elderly person, very clever. She was always taking you to church: when you

came back afterwards you used to preach sermons and tell us all about God Almighty'" (EFP 263).

Religion and nationality are rendered tangential details in Freud's account. Yet, as Schorske shows concerning the crisis Freud was suffering in the midst of his self-analysis, "the Rome of his mature dreams and longings is clearly a love-object" but is fraught with ambivalence because it represents Catholicism and conservatism as well as "pleasure, maternity, assimilation, fulfillment" (PP 192–93). The Czech nanny might well be read as a libidinal and symbolic nexus connecting Freud's deepest sense of himself to the historical context in which he was now having to make his life. Schorske rightly questions the tendency of Freud and his followers to identify "the Rome longing with the nanny as mother-substitute and oedipal love-object, reducing the Catholic and Czech attributes of Rome in Freud's dream-pictures to symbols of this primal tie, and interpreting the inhibition preventing travel to Rome as an expression of the incest taboo" (PP 205n.–206n.).

Freud in fact was in the process of transforming the nanny from "originator" into substitute by means of an interpretive trajectory that has been carefully analyzed by Jim Swan and by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White. The self-analysis first disclosed (whether as memory or hypothesis is unclear) that the nanny had initiated him into sexuality: "She was my teacher in sexual matters and scolded me for being clumsy and not being able to do anything." But this history of seduction and the "memory of the old woman who provided me at such an early age with the means for living and going on living" (EFP 262) run counter to the Oedipal narrative then emergent in Freud's thinking. The dreams and recollections Freud revealed in his letters to Fliess put the nanny at the very core of his feelings of love and loss, as well as his traumatic sense of inadequacy and guilt. But by the time these childhood scenes are retold in published form, Freud has turned the episode of the nanny's dismissal and imprisonment into a mere happenstance that backgrounded his anxieties connected with a brief separation from his mother and his jealousies toward his newborn sister.²¹

In tracing how "Freud wrote the maid out of the family romance," Stallybrass and White capture the dynamic of social class that is as central to the structuring of Freud's own experience as it is to the structuring of the Rat Man's divided desire for the Poor Woman and the Rich Woman, or Kafka's divided identification with his father and his father's employees: "Paradoxically, to desire one's mother, despite the incestuous implications, is more acceptable than

to desire a hired help. And Freud seems to validate his emphasis upon his mother by the conscious adult reconstruction which opposes the 'slim and beautiful' mother to the 'ugly, elderly' nurse. Thus, Freud's grief (he cried 'his heart out' for nurse and mother alike) is split between an acceptable and an unacceptable mother. . . . And in the concept-formation of the Oedipus complex, Freud effaces the 'unacceptable' mother."²² The nurse was raising him, but she is refused the social recognitions accorded a mother. The place of honor, that is, of esteem, dependence, and desire, had to be reserved for the mother herself. I find it tempting to speculate that here may lie the biographical origins of Freud's promotion of a symbolic mother in the Oedipus complex at the expense of the mother in her real activities and interactions. To the extent that it was the Czech nanny who performed the tasks of caring, teaching, and playing, this "fifth term" of the Oedipus complex gets completely eclipsed by the "second term," that is, the symbolic mother who embodies the requisite social ideals.

The actual functioning of the bourgeois household made this kind of complication of desire a constant feature of everyday life. Yet Freud took such networks of desire and power, subservience and resentment, exploitation and retaliation, and distilled from them the Oedipal triangle of I-mother-father. He brushed out seduction by a servant in his self-analysis, just as he would brush out seductions of servants by the Rat Man, to keep the emotional family portrait free of all these unsightly, uneducated, immoral proletarians. That their actual presence was part and parcel of his patients' and his own experience never found theoretical expression.

Did mere Victorian reticence, or perhaps ruling-class arrogance, form this blind spot? I think it more to the point that Freud carried out the simplification to the nuclear family because it enabled him to contain the larger crisis of political identity in a more manageable form. The splintering of the promised synthesis of vocation, marriage, and citizenship that was disturbing the lifeworld of liberal Vienna did not have to be confronted as a specific set of deep-seated social and cultural pathologies. The crisis it unleashed in individuals' life-histories could be read, instead, as the misadventures of instinct coming into conflict with civilization.

The historically evolved and now threatened norms of male socialization could be rewritten as a psychic norm which could henceforth serve as theoretical and therapeutic benchmark. The puzzle of the individual's integration into market, household, and polis could be solved on an utterly new terrain. Diagnosis could be accomplished by a remembering of family history and a repeating

of filial loves and hatreds in the dialogue with the analyst, and the cure could be achieved by the working through of an individual myth and private history.

Freud's intellectual and therapeutic tactics were thus following in the tracks of the social process that had already displaced onto the family the hopes and problems of community. Community, too, is therefore suppressed whenever the clinical picture acquires too much social density. The Czech nanny's importance was also connected to her Catholicism. The visions of heaven and hell with which she inspired Freud the toddler resonated in his dreams forty years later because of the professional pressures and anti-Semitism that had slowed his career. In the midst of his intellectual doubts, his career crisis, his mourning of his father, and the political crisis in Vienna, Freud was haunted by dreams that questioned his Jewish identity and utopianized complete assimilation and conversion.

The temptation to convert to Christianity tugged at the unconscious and conscious thoughts of Jewish families in the Habsburg empire and in Germany. Schorske shows how Freud's dreams in the critical weeks of 1897 pulled him between two heroic models, both of whom he had often yearned to imitate and who were associated with his own most complex dream symbol, Rome: Hannibal, the Semitic general and politician who had failed to reach Rome; and Johan Joachim Winckelmann, the scholar who conquered Rome intellectually but at the cost of renouncing Judaism for Christianity (see PP 191–93). Politics versus science, Jewishness versus conversion, rebellion versus accommodation.

My point is not to highlight Freud's conflicts of cultural identity. The point to be made is that these kinds of questions of cultural identity, community, belonging, and estrangement are thoroughly a part of the forming of desires and identities. Freud himself always remained very clearheaded about his affiliations, especially in times of greatest political stress and uncertainty. In 1926, for example, he explained in an interview the effect of rising German anti-Semitism on his sense of self: "My language is German. My culture, my attainments are German. I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of anti-Semitic prejudice in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew."²³

In the household in which Freud himself was raised, the visible distinctions between social classes, and the clash of values between rural Catholics and urban secular Jews, were indelible aspects of his earliest, most formative experiences—so much so that when he faced the dangers of anti-Semitism and the doubting of his intel-

lectual achievements at forty, it was the Czech Catholic nanny who came back in his dreams. But Freud's emergent interpretive procedures were destined to subordinate and dispel just this tangle of cultural identities and social relationships. He had made the family his interpretive reference point, that is, the psychic representation of the family simplified to I-mother-father, and forced all else to the wings.

Freud neutralized the many links between history and life-history in diagnosing the afflictions that disturbed the bourgeois aspirations of vocation and marriage and the liberal ideals that were to guide young men in becoming owners, citizens, and fathers. He tried, instead, to recover the liberal ideal in his model of an ideal route to the formation and dissolution of the Oedipus complex. A young man had only to overcome his incestuous and aggressive impulses toward his mother and father to step into his roles in civil society, the family, and the state. When Freud then turned to explain why this ideal maturation was typically derailed or complicated or compromised, he set aside the historical dimension altogether. He attributed Oedipal pathologies to nothing more tangible than an insufficient fear of the father and a sexual constitution that failed to be singularly masculine and heterosexual.

The limitations of Freud's view were by no means an intellectual fabrication or a mere error. Pressures within and upon family life do indeed make the I-mother-father relationship into an emotional stencil laid over the individual's relation to the world. It is not therefore a question of examining society and politics instead of family relationships. Rather it is a question of grasping the social and political processes that variously shape or dictate or interrupt family life, or are reflected or refracted or veiled by family relationships.

Freud absented himself from this task by calibrating his theoretical and therapeutic work to an ideal of male socialization which naturalizes compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance as "psychic" norms. As I have also been arguing, this psychic norm was used to ground the mapping of the family, civil society, and the state at the very time that the political underpinnings the liberal mapping really required were collapsing. Historically, a new structure of feeling had crystallized as communal needs and aspirations were shifted onto the family, as public and private were distinguished and encoded anew, and as the male owner-citizen-father role emerged and was valorized. Even as this structure of feeling took root in everyday experience, it was fraught with conflicts and a capacity for pathology. And it was in the midst of a particularly

intense crisis at the precise moment of Freud's most significant discoveries.

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NOTES

- 1 Carl E. Schorske, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*," in his *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1981), pp. 181–207; hereafter cited in text as PP.
- 2 Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York, 1979), pp. 62–67.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and tr. James Strachey (London, 1953–74), IV, 196; hereafter cited in text as *ID*.
- 4 Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in her *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford, 1989), p. 43; hereafter cited in text as FSC.
- 5 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), *Standard Edition*, XXI, 101; hereafter cited in text as *CD*.
- 6 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York, 1985).
- 7 Franz Kafka, "Letter to his father," in *The Sons* (New York, 1989), p. 148; hereafter cited in text.
- 8 Carole Pateman, "Genesis, Fathers and the Political Sons of Liberty," in her *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, 1988), p. 109.
- 9 Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (1928), in *Standard Edition*, XXI, 184; hereafter cited in text as *DP*.
- 10 See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York, 1983), pp. 177–205.
- 11 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923), *Standard Edition*, XIX, 32; hereafter cited in text.
- 12 Sigmund Freud, "The Paths to Symptom-Formation," in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–17), *Standard Edition*, XVI, 368–69.
- 13 The case history of the Wolf Man provides the most detailed discussion of Freud's construction of a primal scene memory. See Sigmund Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918), *Standard Edition*, XVII, 29–47, 89–103.
- 14 Pateman, "Genesis, Fathers and the Political Sons of Liberty," p. 106; hereafter cited in text.
- 15 See also Gregory Zilboorg, "Masculine and Feminine: Some Biological and Cultural Aspects," *Psychiatry*, 7 (1944), 257–96.
- 16 Partha Chatterjee, "A Response to Taylor's Invocation of Civil Society," *Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies*, 39 (1990), 9; hereafter cited in text as RTI. Chatterjee's response is to Charles Taylor, "Invoking Civil Society," *Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies*, 31 (1990), pp. 1–17.
- 17 Chatterjee's reflection on the nation and community and on nationalism and the politics of postcolonial societies shares a number of themes with the very important

work of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York, 1991).

18 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox (New York, 1967), pp. 261–62.

19 Carl E. Schorske, “The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism,” in *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, pp. 24–115.

20 Sigmund Freud, “Extracts from the Fliess Papers” (1892–99), *Standard Edition*, I, 261; hereafter cited in text as EFP.

21 See Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), *Standard Edition*, VI, 49–52.

22 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, 1986), pp. 159–60. See also Jim Swan, “Mater and Nannie: Freud’s Two Mothers and the Discovery of the Oedipus Complex,” *American Imago*, 31 (1974), 1–64.

23 Sigmund Freud, Interview with George Sylvester Viereck, in Viereck’s *Glimpses of the Great* (1927; rpt. New York, 1930), p. 34; quoted in Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York, 1978), p. 90.