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FREUD, DORA, AND THE MAID: A STUDY OF COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

JULES GLENN, M.D.

Early advances in psychoanalytic knowledge, profound though they were, were incomplete structures to be built upon, modified, and partially discarded. In addition to errors due to insufficient knowledge, Freud’s difficulties with Dora stemmed from countertransference. Dora’s transference included an identification with a governess/maid. Important oedipal role played by a nursemaid in Freud’s life made him vulnerable to being left by Dora. The maid, Monika, “the prime originator” of Freud’s neurosis, seduced him, chastised him, and taught him of hell. In his self-analysis she was associated with Freud’s mother who left him when she gave birth to his sister. When he was two and a half years old, Monika was discharged and jailed for stealing.

I suggest that Freud’s attraction to Dora revealed itself in his libidinal imagery of the treatment and his premature sexual interpretations, the effects of which he misjudged. Defending against his attraction, he pushed her away from him, did not act to keep her in analysis or allow her to reenter analysis later. In addition, since Dora had left him as he must have felt his childhood nursemaid had, he reacted as if she were that maid. Hurt, saddened, and angered, he used reversal and deserted her, thus damping his feelings.

FREUD HAD DIFFICULTY WITH Dora who, after three months, stopped her analysis, much of it because he was a pioneer, the first person to attempt psychoanalysis of an adolescent. He had to determine, with his patient’s help, what the best technique was. He was not yet fully aware of the power of the transference. While he had discovered a great deal about the psychology of adolescents (Freud, 1905b), he still did not understand them sufficiently (see A. Freud, 1958; Erikson, 1959, 1964). In this paper, I shall concentrate not on defects of tech-
nique based on insufficient knowledge, but on one particular aspect of his countertransference to Dora—his reactions to her picturing herself a governess (Glenn, 1980a). I shall present detailed evidence to support my thesis that Freud's difficulty with Dora stemmed from this countertransference. I have already written about Freud's technique with Dora, and its relation to the fact that she was an adolescent. Adolescent analysis requires special approaches. Adolescents tend to evoke particular types of emotional reactions from adults, including analysts (Glenn, 1976, and 1980b). Among these are defenses against incestuous attachments to adolescents because of their seductive presence and, through a reversal of generations, the identification of them as parental imagos.

Dora, almost eighteen years old when she started, was in analysis with Freud for the last three months of 1900. She suffered from depression, periods of aphonia, and a hysterical cough which Freud traced to certain unconscious wishes influenced by a serious corrupting family situation. Dora's father, engaged in an affair with Frau K., had allowed Herr K., his mistress's husband, to carry on a flirtation with his daughter. He was distressed that Dora wanted to upset the interfamily balance by insisting he stop his affair. Freud saw that, although Dora resented Herr K.'s toying with her, she unconsciously loved him and his wife, a displaced display of positive and negative oedipal attachments, and that her symptoms expressed the love she sought to hide from herself.

During the analysis, Dora had two dreams, the second of which signaled her decision to leave the analysis:

_ 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 and asked about a hundred times: "Where is the station?" I always got the answer: "Five minutes."_
saw a thick wood before me which I went into, and there 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 [Dienstmädchen] opened the door to me and replied that Mother and the others were already at the cemetery [Freud, 1905a, p. 94].

In this discussion I will select certain aspects of the dream that refer to her recent encounter with Herr K. Dora had been invited to visit the K.s at L by Frau K. who had sent her a letter. While there, Herr K. and Dora had gone for a walk at a nearby lake. Herr K. attempted to seduce Dora, saying, "You know I get nothing out of my wife" (p. 98), whereupon she slapped his face and left alone. The walk around the lake would take two and a half hours. Dora wished revenge on Herr K. because he had demeaned her with the same seductive words which he had, she knew, used to seduce a governess in his house. The "two and a half hours" of the dream also referred to her decision to stop the analysis, which she announced at the start of the third session in which she and Freud were analyzing the dream.

Freud's reactions to Dora manifested themselves in a variety of ways:

1. He tended to make deep and sexual interpretations early on, without recognizing that an adolescent would experience frank sexual talk as seductive and dangerous. Freud (1887-1902) talked of his approach as placing a key into a lock, an imagery with sexual implications (Scharfman, 1980). He wrote to Fliess: "I have a new patient, a girl of eighteen. The case has opened smoothly to my collection of picklocks" (p. 325). When we recognize that Freud in the course of this case unhesitatingly stated that keys are phallic symbols, we cannot but suspect that a sexual countertransference was active. The cultural setting,
in which even physicians would not talk to their female patients frankly, justified his approach. Freud, the daring innovator who would not hesitate to observe the workings of the unconscious, could not continue in a tradition that closed its eyes to sexuality. Nevertheless there appears to be a countertransference in his open talk to Dora.

2. He assumed a paternal, authoritarian stance at times, as when he lectured her in a didactic manner about the meaning of matches and fire (1905a, p. 71). Such a posture would confirm for the patient the transference fantasy that the analyst was like her father.

3. Although he was taken with her and said admiringly that she was “in the first bloom of youth—a girl of intelligent and engaging looks” (p. 23), he tended to push her away from him. He observed her antagonism to him, but he failed to recognize its defensive value in warding off a positive affectionate transference, and he used it as a justification for not resuming her analysis when she returned 15 months after she stopped. When Dora announced, after three months of analysis, that that was her last session, he made no effort to support the forces within her that wanted to continue. He said: “You know that you are free to stop the treatment at any time. But to-day we will go on with our work” (p. 105). Continuing with the work did not include any systematic and sustained attempt to analyze the transference reactions that led to her decision to stop, reactions that had to do with her identification with a servant.

Let us pick out the evidence that Dora pictured herself a governess.

1. She would look after Herr and Frau K.’s children. “She had been a mother to them, she had taught them, she had gone for walks with them, she had offered them a complete substitute for the slight interest which their own mother showed in them” (p. 37). In this way Dora behaved to them as her own governess (Gouvernante) had behaved toward her.

2. Dora had been quite attached to this governess, an unmarried woman, well read and of advanced views, until Dora
realized that the governess was in love with Dora’s father. She then recognized that the governess had been close to her in order to win her father’s heart, and dropped her. She insisted the governess be dismissed. Freud pointed out that Dora was like this governess in that she looked after Herr K.’s and Frau K.’s children to win Herr K.’s affection.

Here we see important aspects of Dora’s Oedipus complex. As a caretaker of children, a maternal figure, she could be loved by her father and, through displacement, Herr K. The negative Oedipus complex manifested itself in her affection for the governess whom she also emulated.

3. A second governess, with whom Dora identified, appeared in conjunction to the second dream. In the final session Dora revealed that the K.s had a young children’s governess (Gouvernante der Kinder) who told Dora that Herr K. had made advances to her while Frau K. was away. Trying to seduce her, he said that “he got nothing from his wife,” the very words Herr K. used with Dora. Herr K. succeeded in his venture and then lost interest in the governess. When she told her parents about this, they instructed her to return home immediately. However, this young woman remained with the K.s a while longer in the hope that Herr K. would become interested again. When he did not, she gave a maid’s warning, presumably two weeks’ notice, and then left.

Dora identified with this governess as well as the first one mentioned here. When Herr K. tried to seduce her at the lake, he used the words he had used with the governess. Dora, furious at being treated “like a governess [Gouvernante], like a servant [dienende Person]” (p. 106), slapped Herr K. Dora was jealous and vengeful. Freud was cognizant of Dora’s picturing herself as a maidservant. He told her, “let me draw your attention to the repeated occasions upon which you have identified yourself with her [Fräulein] both in your dream and in your conduct.

1 The ages of the children of Herr and Frau K. are not given, but it would appear from Freud’s usage that they had not yet reached adolescence. They were old enough for their caretaker to be called a governess.
You told your parents what happened . . . just as the governess [Fräulein] wrote and told her parents . . . The letter in the dream which gave you leave to go home is the counterpart of the governess's [Fräulein's] letter from her parents . . .” (pp. 106-107). In addition, just as the governess wanted to see whether Herr K. would show further interest, Dora waited two weeks for the same reason before telling her parents. The choice of two weeks adds confirmation of her identification with “a person in service [dienende Person]” (p. 107) who traditionally gives two weeks' notice.

The same identification appeared in the transference. As Freud mentioned, Dora had decided to halt her treatment two weeks before telling him so. Unconsciously and without verbalizing it until the last day of the treatment, she gave him two weeks' notice. As Freud said, “That sounds just like a maidservant [Dienstmädchen] or a governess [Gouvernante]—a fortnight’s warning” (p. 105). Dora had identified with the servant who loved her father and the one who loved Herr K. Through displacement, she became the governess who loved and left the seductive Freud who rejected her. As Freud said in the postscript, “I ought to have said to her, ‘It is from Herr K. that you have made the transference on to me. Have you noticed anything that leads you to suspect me of evil intentions similar to Herr K.’s?’ ” (p. 118).

When Dora returned 15 months later for a single visit, the “fortnight” motif again appeared. Two weeks before she had read that Freud had received a professorship. She then developed a facial neuralgia, a self-punishment, Freud thought, for her wish for revenge. Freud did not think this signified her wish to return to him for further analysis, and sent her away. He played into her fantasy that she was the rejected governess.

We may conclude that Dora competed with the governess who loved her father/Herr K. Identifying with the servant, she, in fantasy, engaged in a sexual liaison with her father and the father figure. (Her father too had used the fateful words about getting nothing from his wife when he spoke to Freud!) Iden-
tifying with the servant, she also was rejected, a punishment for forbidden wishes. Most likely her feeling like a servant indicated a masochistic trend as well. She felt like an inferior submissive person, mistreated by men and women.

Freud obviously observed Dora's identification with a maid-servant (Dienstmädchen) or governess (Gouvernante); he wrote about it. However, he failed to recognize that his naming Dora for his sister's children's nursemaid (Kindermädchen), "a person employed in someone else's house" (1901, p. 241), a person in service (dienende Person) signified a deeper attachment, a countertransference.

Before discussing Dora's pseudonym, let me say a few words about my use of the term "countertransference" (Bernstein and Glenn, 1978). Countertransference, Freud (1910) said, "arises in [the physician] as a result of the patient's influence on his unconscious feelings" (p. 144) and requires self-analysis to "overcome" it. Freud (1911) offers as an example of countertransference the analyst's feeling proud of a "conquest" when a patient falls in love with him, a type of transference. Later he warns both against gratifying a patient's transference love and repulsing it (pp. 165-166, 169-170). Rather, the analyst should "treat it as something unreal . . ." and trace it "back to its unconscious origins" (p. 166). In accordance with this line of thought, Bernstein and I have used the term to denote the analyst's transferences that appear in response to the patient's transference. Countertransference refers to the analyst's action, temptations, inhibitions, and blind spots due to his reactive transferences. We do not include the analyst's counteridentification, empathy, signal reactions, or preformed transferences that may appear even before he has a patient to react to (see also Gitelson, 1973; Reich, 1973).

We have examined certain of Dora's transference manifestations in her picturing herself a governess, maidservant, or person in service. We shall now search for Freud's countertransference reactions to her transference fantasy.

Freud (1901) chose the name of a servant as a pseudonym for his patient.
There appeared to be a very wide choice; some names... were ruled out from the start—the real name... then the names of members of my own family... But otherwise there was no need for me to be at a loss for a name... [O]ne name and only one occurred to me—the name "Dora."

I asked myself how it was determined. Who else was there called Dora? I should have liked to dismiss with incredulity the next thought to occur to me—that it was the name of my sister's nursemaid [Kindermädchen]... At once there came to my mind a trivial incident from the previous evening which provided the determinant I was looking for. I had seen a letter on my sister's dining-room table addressed to "Fraulein Rosa W." I asked in surprise who there was of that name, and was told that the girl I knew as Dora was really called Rosa, but had had to give up her real name when she took up employment in the house, since my sister could take the name "Rosa" as applying to herself as well. "Poor people," I remarked in pity, "they cannot even keep their own names!... When next day I was looking for a name for someone who could not keep her own, "Dora" was the only one to occur to me...

Freud then realized that his use of the name Dora was based on the case itself, for "a governess [Gouvernante]... exercised a decisive influence on my patient's story, and on the course of the treatment as well" (p. 241). Freud does not state in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* that not one but two governesses influenced Dora and that she identified with them, that Dora pictured herself as a servant. Nor does Freud pay attention to the names that entered his mind before the name Dora, names he rejected, "the names of members of my own family" (p. 240). Freud failed to recognize that he was tempted to give Dora the name of a relative, thus indicating an incestuous attachment to her, a transference! Indeed, naming Dora for a nursemaid (Kindermädchen) itself evokes incestuous resonances,
for Freud had written that a maid\(^2\) who raised him for the first two and a half years of his life was “the prime originator [Ur-heberin] of neurosis” (Freud, 1887-1902, p. 219).

The equation of Dora, a nursemaid, a servant, and a governess, implies a close association of the three in Freud's mind. Indeed Freud (1901) calls the servant of his sister that Dora was named for first a nursemaid [Kindermädchen] and then a person in service [dienende Person]. It may seem unnecessary to point out that both a nursemaid and a governess share certain characteristics; they are servants and they look after children. Generally a nursemaid looks after younger children whom she may nurse, and a governess supervises older children, but in fact both nursemaids and governesses care for children.

The aged and ugly but clever nurse (Kinderfrau), a maid-servant named Monika Zajic, worked for Sigmund Freud's half-brother Emanuel's wife as well as Freud's mother (Clark, 1980, p. 11) and remained in the household until Freud was almost three. Freud said this Catholic Czech woman was the prime originator of his neurosis. She was closely associated with Freud's mother. There is no reason to believe she nursed Freud, and neither Jones (1953), Schur (1972) nor Clark (1980) suggests that she did. Probably she was too old. Nevertheless, implying that he experienced with her a maternal nutritive and caring function, Freud (1887-1902) wrote in Letter 70 to Fliess dated October 3 and 4, 1897, “the old woman provided me at such an early age with the means of living and surviving” (pp. 219-220). Freud remembered her seducing him, but did not say how. “She was my instructress in sexual matters” (p. 220) and “gave me a high opinion of my own capacities” (p. 219). On the negative side, he stated, in association to a dream, “she chided me for being clumsy and not being able to do anything” (p. 220). She took him to church and taught him “a great deal of God and hell” (p. 219).

This maid was connected with both sexuality and punish-

\(^2\) Freud called her die Alte, das alte Weib, and Kinderfrau in his letters to Fliess, Swan (1974) observes, as well as Kindermädchen and Dienstmädchen.
ment. Freud associated her with both his mother and father. In one passage he said that, contrary to his seduction theory, his "father played no active role" in seducing him but that his mother did, and that the old woman told him of hell. In the same letter he said he was sexually aroused by his mother between two and two and a half. "[L]ibido toward matrem was aroused" by "seeing her nudam" (p. 219) when they slept together on a train trip. Most likely his connecting the maid with mother and father indicated the primary impact she had, her screen function, and her symbolization, through displacement, of both father and mother.

Freud lost this extremely important person when he was almost three. She was caught stealing from her ward and the household, was accused, dismissed, and sent to jail. Freud amplified on the disappearance of his maid in a letter to Fliess dated October 15, 1907 (Freud, 1887-1902, pp. 221-225) and in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901): During his self-analysis, he recalled a scene from his childhood.

I saw myself standing in front of a cupboard demanding something and screaming, while my half-brother, my senior by twenty years, held it open. Then suddenly my mother, looking beautiful and slim, walked into the room, as if she had come in from the street... I did not know what more to make of it. Whether my brother wanted to open or shut the cupboard... why I was crying, and what the arrival of my mother had to do with it—all this was obscure to me.... Analytic effort led me to take a quite unexpected view of the picture. I had missed my mother, and had come to suspect that she was shut up in this wardrobe or cupboard; and it was for that reason that I was demanding that my brother should open the cupboard. When he did... and... my mother was not in the cupboard, I began to scream. ... [T]he appearance of my mother... allayed my anxiety and longing. But how did the child get the idea of looking for his absent mother in the cupboard? Dreams which I had... contained obscure
allusions to a nurse of whom I had other recollections . . . for example, that she used to insist on my dutifully handing over to her the small coins I received as presents. . . .

I . . . [asked] my mother, who was by then grown old, about the nurse [Kinderfrau]. I learned . . . that this clever but dishonest person had carried out considerable thefts in the house during my mother's confinement and had been taken to court . . . by my half-brother. This information threw a flood of light on the childhood scene. . . .

The sudden disappearance of the nurse [Kinderfrau] had not been a matter of indifference to me: the reason why I had turned . . . to this brother . . . was probably because I had noticed that he played a part in her disappearance; and he had answered in the elusive and punning fashion that was characteristic of him: "She's 'boxed up.'" At that time, I understood this answer in a child's way [i.e., literally], but I stopped asking any more questions. . . .

When my mother left me a short while later, I suspected that my naughty brother had done the same thing to her . . . and I forced him to open the cupboard for me. . . . [My] mother's slimness was emphasized [because] it must have struck me as having just been restored to her. . . . [My] sister was born at that time, and when I was three years old my half-brother and I ceased living in the same place" (Freud, 1901, pp. 49-51).

Freud, in a footnote, adds to the meaning of the memory. The cupboard symbolized his pregnant mother's inside where his sister Anna had been. And he must have thought that his brother, a substitute for his father, had been responsible for introducing the baby into her.

Hence the sudden disappearance of Monika, tied with the loss of money and toys, was also associated with punishment and the loss of his mother when she gave birth to his sister, Anna. It was also linked to the loss of brother-father, whom he wished to get rid of because he was a rival
for his mother-nurse. Freud must have been dismayed at having lost his nurse, whom he loved. The disappearance of his mother must have added to the distress and anger.

A series of interlacing associations reveals, as Grigg (1973) and Swan (1974) have shown, Freud's oedipal involvement with mother-nurse for which he should be punished by castration or loss of his nurse-mother. Freud's inability to visit Rome, which he very much desired to enter, resulted from his fear of entering mother sexually. Rome stood for mother and also, through its link to Catholicism, his Catholic nurse. Athens, another city Freud had difficulty entering, appears to have similar significance. Freud succeeded in resolving his Oedipus complex sufficiently to visit Rome in 1901 and Athens in 1904.

Nurses and servants appear in a number of Freud's dreams and are linked by him to "the prehistoric old nurse" (Freud, 1900, p. 248). The reader is referred to Grigg's data taken from Freud's letters to Fliess and The Interpretations of Dreams regarding the "Rome series" of dreams, the dream of "going up the stairs," "my son the Myops," "The Three Fates," and others. The dream that most convincingly demonstrates Freud's oedipal attachment to his nursemaid occurred in May 1897:

"I was very incompletely dressed and was going upstairs from a flat on the ground floor to a higher storey . . . three steps at a time. . . . Suddenly I saw a maid-servant [Dienstmädchen] coming down the stairs. . . . I felt ashamed and tried to hurry . . . I was glued to the steps and unable to budge from the spot [Freud, 1900, pp. 238-239]."

In a letter to Fliess, Freud adds that the maid was behind him and that he had "erotic excitement" (Freud, 1887-1902, p. 207) along with the paralysis in the dream.

Analyzing his dream, Freud started with the day residue. The night of the dream he had returned from work below to his bedroom, in disordered dress. Climbing the stairs two to
three steps at a time, as was his habit, he felt reassured about his cardiac status, a wish fulfillment. The staircase of the dream was that of an old female patient. When he visited her, he frequently expectorated on the stairs, a need due to his pharyngitis and heart trouble, a result of smoking, for which one should be punished. The concierge often berated him indirectly for expectorating, and her maidservant [Dienstmädchen] chastised him for dirtying the red carpet with his shoes the day before the dream. Freud also noted the sexual nature of being incompletely dressed, and stated that the members of one’s family and maidservants saw children in such a state. The maidservant (Dienstmädchen) of the day’s experience reminded him of the maidservant (Dienstmädchen) Monika who was, Freud implies, harsh with him if he did not conform to the required standard of cleanliness (Freud, 1900, p. 248). Still, he loved her, Freud observes.

I am suggesting that when Dora identified with a servant, a governess, a caretaker of children, this particular transference manifestation evoked in Freud a countertransference. He unconsciously recalled the nursemaid (called Dienstmädchen and Kinderfrau at different times) who had cared for him, seduced him, threatened him with punishment, and left him. He reacted to Dora as if she were that maid. He treated her like a maid when he told her she was free to stop at any time, but that day they would go on with their work. This seems more appropriate to say to a maid than to a patient.

Dora’s quitting was a blow to Freud, for without her the work had to come to an end. True, he could carry on without her to some degree, but what he could accomplish alone in his writing the paper on Dora had to be limited. She had “deprived [him] of the satisfaction of affording her a far more radical cure for her troubles” (Freud, 1905a, p. 122) and of contributing more to science than the fragment of an analysis. There can be no doubt that Freud was deeply hurt by Dora. He wrote: “No one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human breast... can expect to come through... unscathed” (p. 109).
Dora left Freud as the beloved "prime originator" of his neurosis, a maternal substitute, had left him. He responded with hurt and anger. Losing her, perhaps he felt depressed, but prevented sadness by writing. Freud (1887-1902) wrote Fliess on October 14, 1900, happily announcing the start of Dora's analysis. "It has been a lively time, and I have a new patient . . ." (p. 325). His mood was somber on January 25, 1901 after Dora had quit. He wrote, "I finished 'Dreams and Hysteria' [the article about Dora's case] yesterday and the consequence is that to-day I feel short of a drug" (pp. 325-326). On January 30, 1901, after telling Fliess more about Dora, he concluded the letter by saying, "In the midst of this mental and material depression I am haunted by the thought of spending Easter week in Rome this year" (p. 327). Can we say that having lost Dora as a patient and having finished writing the paper about her, he became sad at the loss of his maid/mother, and wanted to recapture her through entering Rome? Whether this elaboration is true or not, we can see that, invoking reversal, Freud deserted Dora as she had deserted him. He refused to take her back into treatment. He thus defended against expressions of anger during a continued analysis and gave vent to his unconscious rage.

I also suggest that since Dora was the servant/governess/nursemaid/member of his family, he had to get rid of her to avoid incestuous oedipal feelings and punishment for forbidden desires. This is not an unusual interaction between a father and an adolescent daughter "in the first bloom of youth," and it certainly can occur between a male analyst and a female adolescent analysand. Adult and child may be mutually seductive, become frightened, and retreat from each other. They may provoke each other and become hostile to each other to avoid direct libidinal feelings. They may nonetheless find secret libidinal satisfaction in the sadomasochistic interchange that ensues.

As I said at the start, Freud's seductiveness appeared in his deep interpretations, in his insistence on premature use of frank
sexual terminology, as well as in his imagery regarding the analysis—his picking locks. His parental stance appeared when he didactically explained the significance of fire in enuresis. His withdrawal and his antagonism appeared when he failed to make interpretations or take other steps that might have kept Dora in analysis, and in his refusal to take her back.

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