All of Racine's work, and *Phèdre* in particular, has often raised the question among critics about the relation between literature and religion. The debate has taken many forms; for some it is a question of deciding whether the play is predominantly Christian or Greek. Chateaubriand characterized Phèdre as "une épouse chrétienne." According to the Hellenist R. C. Knight, Racine "a fondu ensemble l'héroïne éhontée de Sénèque et l'héroïne pudique d'Euripide" (343). The idea of a "Phèdre janséniste" goes all the way back to Arnauld's supposed remark that Racine's tragic victim was "une chrétienne à qui la grâce a manqué." Racine himself surely contributed to this kind of interpretation by writing in his preface to the play that *Phèdre* was an object lesson in Christian morality in which "les moindres fautes sont sévèrement punies." The dramatist saw his play as a chance to reconcile tragedy with "quantité de personnes célèbres par leur piété et par leur doctrine qui l'ont condamné dans ces derniers temps"—a clear reference to Nicole and the other Jansenist opponents of the theater.

The link between Jansenism and *Phèdre* had become such a cliché by Proust's day that the young hero of *La Recherche* goes to his first theatrical representation fully expecting to see "cilice chrétien, pâleur janséniste" and "Princesse de Clèves et de Trézène" appear on stage. His literary idol, Bergotte, has so filled his head with these impressionistic labels that the real performance of the play turns out to be a disappointment. There is no readily apparent Jansenist pallor, and, at first, he even prefers the acting of the secondary characters to that of the famous Berma.
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The incident serves as an ironic lesson about the secondary cultural production that accompanies an artistic heritage. Marcel is a naive, incompetent spectator because he has not yet learned to see Phèdre with the same eyes as his bourgeois culture: a composite aesthetic object in which moral rigor, aristocratic distinction, and hystericalized femininity are combined in a timeless essence. For us the incident is a challenge to go beyond Bergotte's nebulous phrases in search of a more rigorous and historically aware model of cultural mediation, one that can explain Phèdre as an aesthetic, ascetic, and erotic object of desire. The lesson of Proust is also that, like Bergotte, we cannot avoid projecting some of our own methodological obsessions onto Phèdre.

I begin by surveying some of the recent attempts to define the relationship between Phèdre and Port-Royal. Meticulous comparisons of the Greek and Latin sources with Racine's text have lead Maurice Delcroix and Antoine Adam to conclude that the seventeenth-century dramatist borrowed so heavily from his sources that there is little room for "la thèse janséniste": "N'est-il pas significatif que de tous les vers de la tragédie, ceux qui pourraient nous paraître les plus visiblement inspirés par le jansénisme, soient précisément la traduction d'un développement de Sénèque?" (Adam 4:371). In the same spirit, other critics have disqualified the Jansenist theory because none of the technical terminology of Jansenist theology is employed in Racine's writings. Unless there are "certaines propositions nettes touchant le péché originel, la grâce et la liberté de l'homme," there is no basis for calling the play Jansenist (Backès 148).

Given the fact that Racine wrote neoclassical plays and not theological treatises, one could hardly expect to find extended discussion of religious doctrine in his plays. Mediation must not be so narrowly conceived that only an explicit reference to a theological issue can qualify as a Jansenist element. Likewise, the identification of a "source" does not rule out reference to contemporary issues. Because a passage is based on Seneca does not deprive it a priori of possible Jansenist echoes in its new context. There are less philological and positivistic ways of establishing the intertextual relation between the sacred in Racine's plays and specific religious movements of his day.

MEDIATION: MEANING IS EVERYWHERE

Lucien Goldmann first proposed a more complex way of relating Jansenism to Racine. Drawing on the early Lukács's theory of tragedy, he
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sought to establish a connection between Racine and Jansenism on the basis of a similar “world vision.” This is the set of beliefs shared by a class: “Une vision du monde, c’est précisément cet ensemble d’aspirations, de sentiments et d’idées qui réunit les membres d’un groupe (le plus souvent, d’une classe sociale) et les oppose aux autres groupes” (26). The group in this case is the robe nobility, and their tragic world vision reflects their political eclipse under absolutism.

Referring to the last chapter of Lukács’s *Die Seele und die Formen*, Goldmann defines the tragic as “une crise profonde des relations entre les hommes et le monde social et cosmique” (51). He adopts a chronological scheme in which the tragic world vision follows a period of triumphant rationalism, to be succeeded, in turn, by a dialectical system. The seventeenth-century tragic thinkers, Pascal and Racine, are, according to this interpretation, a reaction against the individualistic, rationalistic worldview of Descartes and Corneille. They express the anxiety of a subject adrift in a cosmos without divine structure and a world without a transindividual human community (41). It is a world devoid of value under the gaze of a cruel, hidden God whose very existence can only be assured by the “pari.” Living under these conditions, one can either abandon the world, like the “solitaires,” or follow the more tragic path of answering the hidden God’s absolute imperative of living in the world. This is the “refus intramondain” that Goldmann finds in *Phèdre* and the *Pensées*.

Many detailed objections can be raised against Goldmann’s thesis: Is the “pari” a permanent disposition of the believer in Pascal? Of what use is so narrow a definition of the tragic that it only applies to three of Racine’s plays? Can Pascal’s texts be called “tragic” in the same sense as Racine’s, since it is only in the latter that we encounter the tragic myths? But these questions are secondary to a larger methodological objection to the concept of world vision.

This approach maintains that all cultural productions have a discernible consistency about them because they are all projections of the same ideal structure, derived causally from economic circumstances. Racine is a “Jansenist,” like Pascal, because his work finds its coherence and its ultimate explanation by reference to an idealistic construct—the noblesse de robe’s world vision. No allowance is made for the differences between Racine and Pascal, or between them and Lukács for that matter; there is one tragic essence, and all cultural manifestations of this view are so many signifiers of the same homologous signified. Thus, under Goldmann’s analysis, Racine’s plays become direct expressions
of Jansenist theology, albeit a humanist Marxism's version of that theology, for example: "Le Soleil de Phèdre est, en réalité, le même Dieu tragique que le Dieu caché de Pascal, de même qu'Andromaque, Junie, Bérénice et Phèdre sont les incarnations concrètes de ces 'appelés' dont la reconnaissance constitue dans l'Ecrit sur la Grâce un des critères pour différencier les jansénistes des calvinistes" (352). Le Dieu caché is a great pioneering effort to illuminate literature from a totally social perspective, but its version of mediation, of how one discourse relates to another, must be abandoned in favor of a model capable of respecting the specificity of cultural objects.

Marxist critics now speak of the "relative autonomy of instances," meaning that superstructural phenomena do not simply reflect prevailing infrastructural realities. The idea of a single underlying worldview has also been abandoned. Each cultural production has its own specificity, and the relation it bears to economic or other cultural formations is not one of simple replication. Fredric Jameson has proposed the term transcoding to describe how the different spheres of cultural production can be related to one another. This conveys the idea of a constant rewriting and recasting of cultural representations from one level to another. He defines the critic's job as "the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or 'texts,' or two very different structural levels of reality" (Political 40). The word transcoding has obvious psychoanalytic overtones; Jameson says elsewhere that the rhetoric of the unconscious must be used to understand how the different cultural sectors are related: "production, projection, repression, displacement and the like" ("Religion" 44).

Jameson's version of mediation is based on Louis Althusser's concept of "structural causality." It is a vision in which meaning and causality in society are not read from an infrastructure upward but rather derived from the total system: "a mediation that passes through the structure rather than a more immediate mediation in which one level folds into another directly" (41).

Religious discourse is of particular interest because it is "the symbolic space within which the collectivity thinks itself and celebrates its own unity." We are at the core of Jameson's methodology here because a transcoding of the text which includes religious discourse enables the critic to make the essential mediation: "All literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political un-
conscious; all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the
destiny of the community” (70).

A similar desire to depart from the classical Marxist version of me­
diation characterizes the work of Michel Foucault, and it is from his
writings that I borrow two concepts central to this study: discourse and
dispositif. In L’Ordre du discours Foucault describes discourse as “une
violence que nous faisons aux choses” (55). This is perhaps the best
definition of the word; it suggests that language is more than just a
transparent medium for human interaction and technical achievement.
It also separates Foucault’s approach from the older, materialistic
determinisms.

“Le discours n’est pas simplement ce qui traduit les luttes ou les
systèmes de domination, mais ce pour quoi, ce par quoi on lutte, le
pouvoir dont on cherche à s’emparer” (12). Much of Foucault’s work
is devoted to analyzing the rules that organize language into definable
discourses capable of exerting the kind of power alluded to in this
passage. The reason discourse is the object of struggle and control is
that it empowers a whole range of individuals and institutions to inter­
vene in people’s lives. Authoritative discourses give the doctor, the
judge, the teacher, and the critic the right to intervene in their area of
competence. Rules of “rarefaction” limit access to certain discourses;
censorship limits certain forms of expression; normative discourses
establish the boundary between madness and reason.

Foucault envisages cultural unity as being achieved by a mediation
between discourses and the work of the critic as consisting in establish­
ing “séries discursives.” Like Althusser, he insists on the autonomy
of cultural instances; the order of discourses is not determined by me­
chanical laws or inherent ideal laws: “Enfin, s’il est vrai que les séries
discursives et discontinues ont chacune, entre certaines limites, leur
régularité, sans doute n’est-il plus possible d’établir entre les éléments
qui les constituent des liens de causalité mécanique ou de nécessité
idéale. Il faut accepter d’introduire l’aléa comme catégorie dans la pro­
duction des événements” (Ordre 61). A given society is nothing more
than a fortuitous series of discourses: “Les discours doivent être traités
comme des pratiques discontinues, qui se croisent, se jouxtent parfois,
mais aussi bien s’ignorent ou s’excluent” (55). Here is where Foucault
parts company with even the most Hegelian Marxists by his denial of
any evolutionary or dialectical laws of history.

In his later work Foucault added two important dimensions to his
discursive approach: he focused more on the positive, solicitous nature
of some discourses, and he developed the concept of the dispositif to include nonlinguistic phenomena in his cultural analyses. He felt that he had been too idealistic in his approach, too concerned with written and spoken codes. In his work on the history of prisons and the history of sexuality he included a wide range of written and unwritten codes and practices that societies have used to define their sexuality and govern their prisons. In an interview he defined the dispositif as:

Un ensemble résolument hétérogène, comportant des discours, des institutions, des aménagements architecturaux, des décisions réglementaires, des lois, des mesures administratives, des énoncés scientifiques, des propositions philosophiques, morales, philanthropiques, bref: du dit, aussi bien que du non dit, voilà les éléments du dispositif. Le dispositif lui-même, c'est le réseau qu'on peut établir entre ces éléments. ("Jeu" 63)

The language of the last sentence reveals the same sort of purely relational vision of society that we saw in Jameson and Althusser. Society exists only as the total equation of its many local operations. There are no privileged expressions of its essence. To paraphrase one of Foucault's aphorisms, meaning is everywhere.

L'AVEU

As indicated above, the other tendency of Foucault's last work on discourses was his interest in the positive aspect of some discursive practices. His earlier insistence on rarefaction and censorship gave way to a study of practices in which subjects were not repressed and excluded from expressing themselves but rather encouraged, even forced, to speak. People are subjected to power/knowledge not only in what they are forbidden to say, or in what authoritative pronouncements are made on their behalf, but also, and perhaps most insidiously, in what they themselves say when they take up the task of stating their own subjectivity, putting it into words, making it available to the various moral, legal, medical, and other normalizing institutions at work in society.

Foucault's prime example of this kind of discourse was the practice of avowal, which seems omnipresent in Western societies: "L'aveu a diffusé loin ses effets; dans la justice, dans la médecine, dans la pédagogie, dans les rapports familiaux, dans les relations amoureuses, dans
l’ordre le plus quotidien, et dans les rites les plus solennels; on avoue ses crimes, on avoue ses péchés, on avoue ses pensées et ses désirs, on avoue son passé et ses rêves, on avoue son enfance; on avoue ses maladies et ses misères" (Hist. Sex. 1:79).

Here I believe we have found a specific kind of discourse and a theory of cultural mediation especially promising for the study of Racine, Jansenism, and a whole range of questions involving literature, religion, and society. Since avowal is, as Foucault says, “diffused” so widely within our culture and our history, its study should be particularly capable of producing the kind of serial vision of societies that our most sophisticated sociological critics advocate.

From the desert communities of primitive Christianity to Dante’s total vision of humanity, from the pulpits, stakes, and confessionals of the Counter-Reformation to the alcoves and stages of court society, the confessional dispositif will prove to be one of the essential networks that define subjects and societies.

CONFESSION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS:
DE TERTULLIEN A FREUD

In 1881 Bertha Pappenheim, the pseudonymous Anna O. of the Studies on Hysteria, was relieved of her hysterical symptoms by “talking them away” to her physician, Joseph Breuer. Anna suffered from bouts of depression, headaches, visual impairments, nervous cough, and a curious loss of her native German tongue—all attributable to a stifling domestic life and the burden of caring for her dying father. Breuer found that, under hypnosis, Anna could recall traumatic experiences related to her father’s illness and death and that the recounting of these events eased her symptoms. It was Anna herself who named this process (in English) her “talking cure.” The case contained, Breuer would later claim, “the germ cell of the whole of psychoanalysis” (qtd. in Gay 64). It was this case, related by Breuer to his under­study, Sigmund Freud, that proved decisive in the emergence of psychoanalysis.

It sparked the young Freud’s interest in hysteria and hypnosis and turned him away from the prevailing somatic explanations of mental illness. Abandoning the neurological laboratory in favor of Charcot’s amphitheater in Paris, Freud began the search for purely psychological explanations for his patients’ symptoms. The idea of the unconscious (das Unbewuβte) appears for the first time in Freud’s writings in the Studies on Hysteria, and henceforth this concept, not brain pathology,
would be the focus of his diagnosis and treatment. Anna O. had dis-
covered and named the essential tool for access to and treatment of
the unconscious.

Over a period of ten years the talking cure would be refined: the
"fundamental rule" and free association were substituted for hypnosis,
and the transference phenomenon was added to the mechanisms of
the cure. But it was Anna O. who had first opened up to psychiatry
her "private theater" and named the process whereby the verbalization
of that inner reality cured her. Was this event so pristine a moment of
methodological breakthrough that it could be fittingly named only by
a hypnotized twenty-two-year-old woman? Pure serendipity? Or had
Breuer and Freud not stumbled, knowingly or not, onto a method of
relieving hysteria and guilt through speech which had a long history
in the West? Was Anna O. not predisposed psychologically by her mi-
lieu, with its historical accumulation of discursive practices, both
to repress her sexuality and to seek relief through avowal? Is Anna
O.'s illness and treatment evidence not only of the "secular advance
of repression," alluded to in The Interpretation of Dreams, but also of a
parallel secular advance of confession?

It will be one of the contentions of this study that Anna O.'s "private
theater" and her talking cure, the actors, scenario, and plot in this med-
icial drama (patient and doctor, consulting room and oppressive bour-
ggeois interior, dutiful daughter and dying patriarch), were all
anticipated, culturally, by a millenary tradition of talking cures of the
soul, verbal performances that territorialize the self, dividing it into
inner and outer domains and submitting it to medical-religious au-
thorities empowered to reconcile it with the community at large. It is
a history that we will trace in its strictly religious origins, but also in
its spilling over and "recoding" in other cultural domains, specifically
in the literary creations of three authors whose work resonates with
decisive moments in the history of confessional discourse.

There are hints of the link between religious confession and psycho-
analysis in Freud's earliest writings. Studies on Hysteria uses the Ger-
man word for confession to describe the effects of the talking cure: "The
injured person's reaction to the trauma only exercises a completely 'ca-
thartic' effect if it is an adequate reaction—as, for instance, revenge. But
language serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be
'abreacted' almost as effectively. In other cases speaking is itself the ade-
quate reflex, when for instance, it is a lamentation or giving utterance to
a tormenting secret, e.g. a confession [Beichte]!" (2:8).1
In *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Henri Ellenberger states that although the Reformation abolished the sacrament of confession, certain Protestant communities continued to practice a "Care of Souls" (*Seelsorge*) based on the belief that a secret transgression, usually sexual in nature, could lead to nervous disorders that only confession could relieve. The idea of the "pathogenic secret" circulated widely among clerics and laymen in the 1880s and 1890s and was first systematized as a basis for psychotherapy by the Viennese physician Moritz Benedikt. Freud refers to Benedikt's ideas in the "Preliminary Communication" (1893) as being "the closest approach to our theoretical and therapeutic statements" (2:8). This reference is, in a sense, the closest thing to a "smoking gun" connection between the tradition of Christian confession and the therapeutic practices of Freud's day. But Freud's implication in the history of confession is more pervasive than a footnote to an obscure physician. The confessional constitution of the subject comes to Freud from many sources, some of the most important being literary.

Freud addresses the question directly in *The Question of Lay Analysis*, to which I will return shortly after some further qualifying remarks about the continuities and discontinuities between confession and psychoanalysis. I will outline briefly the similarities and differences between psychoanalysis and confession in order to avoid the impression of an essentializing, anachronistic imposition of psychoanalytic concepts upon what I maintain was its ancestor—confession. It is a point that Foucault was at pains to emphasize in his own work: "Je ne cherche pas à construire avec cette notion d'aveu, un cadre qui me permettrait de tout réduire au même, des confesseurs à Freud. Au contraire, comme dans *Les mots et les choses*, il s'agit de mieux faire apparaître les différences" ("Jeu" 82). There are always two methodological moments in Foucault's historiography: the genealogical and the archaeologial. The events of the past are viewed simultaneously as intimately linked to the present but also as archaeologically cut off from our age, buried in different epistemological strata than our own period. Present-day instances of *aveu* are thus historically unique, but also part of a "machinerie d'aveu" that, as Foucault once said in an interview, runs "de Tertullien à Freud" ("Jeu" 78). We must try to see these practices from the double perspective of archaeology and genealogy.

Of course, archaeology and genealogy are metaphors for the way discourses evolve over time. Cultural practices are neither artifacts waiting to be uncovered by an archaeologist nor genes to be traced by
a geneticist from one generation to the next. But the words usefully suggest how the same practice is both a hybrid formed of preexisting "genes" and a unique artifact located in a specific cultural stratum. Psychoanalysis is made up of prior elements drawn from medicine, religion, and literature which coalesced in a single moment to form a unique discourse. There are, as a consequence, always analogies between psychoanalysis and confession. Point by point one can establish these similarities which prove that the talking cure derives historically from confession. But just as important are the crucial differences that appear in the study of these analogies and that prove the radical difference between analysis and confession. Let us take a look at some of the similarities and differences.

1. Transference and the other scene. In confession, as in analysis, the believer performs a ritual that takes its meaning from another scene. The confessor addresses his or her pater peccavi not just to the priest but most essentially to a transferential father in heaven. The other scene of Christian confession is the spiritual world of heaven and hell, time and eternity, sin and forgiveness. The other scene of analysis is the unconscious and its repressed memories and childhood fantasies. The analyst allows himself to be a surrogate for the real father so that the analysand can reenact forgotten traumatic events and gain mastery over them. The difference lies in the fact that analysis encourages the patient to dramatize his or her hostility toward the father, which is viewed as normal, universal, and admissible. The hostility is cathartically released by free expression. In Christian confession the expressivity of the words and the accompanying emotions are important, but the confessor is supposed to feel contrition, not aggression. In Christianity, grace and forgiveness are conferred by the transferential father; in analysis, only the patient can heal himself by imaginatively enacting a relationship with a human father whose real participation in the cure is irrelevant.

2. The power to relieve symptoms. Several similarities and differences appear here. In *The Question of Lay Analysis* (1926), Freud discusses the difference between confession and psychoanalysis in the form of a dialogue. The question is posed: "You assume that every neurotic has something oppressing him, some secret. And by getting him to tell you about it, you relieve his oppression and do him good. That, of course, is the principle of confession." Freud responds: "In confession the sinner tells what he knows, in analysis the neurotic has
to tell more. Nor have we heard that confession has ever developed
enough power to get rid of actual pathological symptoms" (20:189).
According to Freud, only psychoanalysis obliges the confessant to
delve into his or her unconscious and search out the hidden causes of
neurosis. This comparison is true concerning simple confession, but
there are more sophisticated techniques of spiritual direction which go
back to the Desert Fathers. In the monastic communities of the East,
monks were obliged to reveal all of their thoughts (not just sins) to a
spiritual director who then deciphered those thoughts as originating
from either God, the devil, or the monk's own unconscious. They em­
ployed a hermeneutics that resembles psychoanalysis on several
points.

The distinction would be less the technique than the underlying
world vision and the nature of the outcome. One is a spiritual pardon,
an absolution in which an expected punishment for sin in an afterlife
is suspended, the other a metaphorical medical cure. Psychoanalysis
was invented by physicians, it was called a "cure," and its language is
couched in scientific neologisms. Abreagieren, Übertragung, Durcharbei­
tung, Agieren—these are the terms Freud developed for the phases of
the cure. The analysand comes to a doctor with some expectation of
being healed in the manner in which modern internal medicine is ca­
pable of healing the body. The old religious guilt is replaced by a non­
judgmental attitude that dispels excess guilt and restores psychic
energy to a repressed subject. All analysis asks of its adherents is the
courage of enlightened self-knowledge; its healing powers are based
on the knowledge and emotion that issue from the subject's confession;
the uncensored outpouring of the self leads to both intellectual insight
and an emotional replay of past traumatic events, both of which effect
the cure.

Confession was likewise called a cure, and the priest was consid­
ered a doctor. The Lateran decree describes him as an "experienced
doctor who applies wine and oil to the wound and inquires of the
sinner the circumstances of his sin." Besides the obvious differences in
the kind of medical science that serves as a metaphor for confession
here, there are other major differences between the religious scene of
confession and psychoanalysis.

The religious confessant is in the grip of sin and the devil. Speaking
of missionaries soliciting confessions in seventeenth-century France,
Bernard Dompnier says that their methods were based on one assump­
tion: "Le pécheur est un prisonnier de Satan" (213). They drove this
message home in their sermons to the extent that people actually reported seeing the various devils that possessed them. "Bientôt, des pécheurs ébranlés par la prédication reconnaissent que Satan leur apparaît ou leur parle, soit lorsqu’ils commettent certains péchés, soit la nuit. Quelquefois, la mission est le théâtre de scènes de possessions" (214). Such terror culminated in the salutary "aveu de bouche," which defeated the devil and liberated the beleaguered sinner. The faithful hastened to confession to deliver themselves from a hidden menace that had suddenly manifested itself in the community.

Reflecting on such scenes, however, one recalls Freud’s pronouncement on the difference between confession and analysis: "Nor have we heard that confession has ever developed enough power to get rid of actual pathological symptoms." Confession certainly had enough power at its disposal in centuries past, and this power could lead to a relief of "pathological symptoms." Dompnier says that in the seventeenth century, spiritual anxiety and guilt often led to somatic disturbances that ecclesiastical authorities readily interpreted as the consequences of sin. Confession could both relieve guilt and cure symptoms: "Elle [la confession] arrache en effet les corps à la tutelle du diable, soit dans le cas des possessions, soit dans celui des maladies qui—rappelons-le—sont souvent présentées par les ecclésiastiques du temps comme des conséquences du péché" (214).

3. Possession and alienation. Although in The Question of Lay Analysis Freud insists on the difference between psychoanalysis and confession, elsewhere in his writings he sees the analogy between his cases and those of demonic possession from the past. Speculating in a letter to Fliess that “the medieval theory of possession, held by the ecclesiastical courts, was identical with our theory of a foreign body and a splitting of consciousness,” he asks why the confessions of possessed women under torture were “so like the communications made by my patients in psychical treatment” (1:242). Freud explains the parallel in terms of the seduction theory. Like his hysterical patients, the possessed, by their language and mimetic symptoms, are acting out details of the seduction scene.

Catherine Clément sees the coincidence as evidence of a continuing persecution of female sexuality under the guise of the witch and the hysterical. Speaking of hysterical symptoms as metaphorical signs written on the body, she writes: “Poids subversif du retour du refoulé, évaluation du pouvoir de l’archaïque, puissance ou non de l’imaginaire
The sorceress and the hysteric act out a recalcitrant female sexuality that is linked to paganism and bisexuality. These scandals of female sexuality must be exorcised through confessional rituals; the witch and the hysteric must take upon themselves all that is “unnatural” and inadmissible about human sexuality.

Shortly after the letter to Fliess maintaining that the devil in possession cases was in fact the childhood seducer, Freud shifted to the theory of infantile sexuality. Henceforth, the hysteric’s symptoms were no longer fragments from an actual seduction scene but rather fantasies of being seduced, childhood wishes directed toward the father. But this only intensified the inquisitorial aspect of analysis: the patient had to admit to harboring a desire for the father or his surrogate (e.g., Herr K. in the Dora case).

Thus although psychoanalysis maintains that the devil is a persecutory image of the father and that the external alienation present in possession cases signifies the estrangement of the conscious from the unconscious, both the exorcist and the analyst resort to confession as a means of bringing about a cure. In exorcisms it was believed that if the “Father of lies” could be engaged in conversation and forced to state his name, he could be dislodged from the body of his victims. This conviction was so strong that, in the face of scarce evidence, exorcists often tortured confessions out of uncooperative subjects. Urbain Grandier, the Jesuit priest accused of demonically possessing the Ursuline nuns of Loudun, was mercilessly tortured in an attempt to extract a confession. Aldous Huxley describes the attempts of the exorcist, Father Lactance, to defeat the devil by forcing Grandier to confess:

[Grandier] was bound, stretched out on the floor, with his legs, from the knees to the feet, enclosed between four oaken boards. By driving wedges into the space separating the two movable boards, it was possible to crush the victim’s legs against the fixed framework of the machine.... One of the new wedges was inserted between the boards and this time it was Father Lactance who swung the mallet. “Dicas!” he shouted after every blow. “Dicas, Dicas!” (231, 234)

Lactance wanted a confession to justify the death sentence that was imposed on Grandier, but he also wanted a verbal victory over the
devil. He wanted to unleash Grandier from the power of Satan. The torture would stop if the accused would only speak, just as the hysterical symptom would disappear if the patient could be induced to talk. One can see in Freud a descendant of Father Lactance, another wielder of power/knowledge exercised by those who insist on the confession of the subject. Foucault and Clément draw the parallel in order to shock modern readers into recognizing the power wielded by therapists, ministers, and police. Behind the analyst, Foucault wants us to see the exorcist: "On avoue ou on est forcé d’avouer."

In a recent study of confession, Jeremy Tambling has addressed this question and chosen to take issue with Foucault, Deleuze, and Jacques Donzelot, who characterize Freud as an oppressive, normalizing scientist: "Far from psychoanalysis colluding with forms of confessional knowledge, it has the capacity to put into question precisely the repressions and interdictions forming the basis of religious confession and of societal restraint" (182). It is undeniable that psychoanalysis undermines religious confession by deculpabilizing much sexual behavior ostracized by Christianity and by seeking to eradicate unwarranted guilt, not sin. The question is whether Freud replaced a religious ritual—by definition for Freud an obsessive ceremony designed to ward off repressed desires—with an equally coercive practice based upon pseudoscientific norms. Freud ends up pathologizing and discriminating against "perverse" sexualities with the same methodology and zeal as the moralists.

Tambling sees in Freud's later work an attempt to dismantle "the Oedipal representation of things," a project he shares with the Nietzsche of The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo. By this he means an attempt to liberate the subject from its infinite indebtedness to the past and the patriarchal order. Along with many others, let us say that if Freud is to be excluded from the list of normalizing scientists and abusive confessors, it must be done by emphasizing the other Freud, the scientist who admits that theory itself is propelled by a drive, a Wisstrieb; the autobiographical author who constantly sets himself up to be psychoanalyzed by his readers; the grammatological psychologist whose final model of the mind is the text. The uniqueness of Freud in the history of confessional discourse is the fact that his text furnishes the tools for its own deconstruction. We will return to the liberatory potential inherent in Freud's use of literature shortly, but there remains a final key distinction to be drawn between psychoanalysis and confession.
4. Religious versus secular epiphany. At the core of Christian confession is a spiritual, mystical event. St. Augustine, addressing himself to God, says: "Thou are there in the hearts of those that confess to Thee" (Confessions, chap. 5, p. 165). Confession undoes evil through verbal reenactment, and it brings God into the heart of the believer; it is a divine epiphany. In another passage from his commentaries on the Psalms, Augustine equates confession with spiritual life itself. The sinner, like Lazarus, is dead and bound by his sins until Christ calls him forth: "The Lord Himself with His voice aroused him from the tomb, restored his life by crying unto him, overcame the mass of earth that was heaped upon the tomb." The sinner hears this call from God and leaves the tomb by confessing: "When thou hearst a man is sorry for his sins, he hath already come again to life; when thou hearst him by confessing lay bare his conscience, he is already drawn forth from the tomb" (Schaff vi, 500).

The basis of psychoanalysis is a different sort of epiphany—a humanist and materialist manifestation of the Nature of Man. Psychoanalysis, like religion, can console for life's greatest losses. Its inceptional case was based on Anna O.'s overcoming the trauma of her father's death, and Freud himself was enabled to write The Interpretation of Dreams by working through the loss of his own father. There is something comparable to the Christian art of dying in Freud's poignant, yet scientifically dispassionate, accounts of death and the guilt feelings of survivors.

At its highest point of revelation, in moments in some way analogous to Augustine's divine epiphany, psychoanalysis confers upon its subjects an anthropological epiphany. As a scientist and not a theologian, the analyst brings the patient face-to-face with his or her humanity. When the analysand acknowledges his Oedipus complex, he is witness to one of nature's laws in his life. Like the hero of Sophocles' play, the analysand is forced to confront nature: "Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood" (4:297). Freud further naturalizes if not divinizes this moment of analytic epiphany when he declares that "there must be something which makes a voice within us ready to recognize the compelling force of destiny in the Oedipus" (4:296). This humanistic and natural transcendental moment of recognition is what distinguishes psychoanalysis most profoundly from Christian confession. Yet it is a recognition not
INTRODUCTION

without certain affinities to religious experience, as Mark Edmundson has recently stated in a passage rich in other observations about the effects of reading Freud and becoming a Freudian subject:

This self-reading is often accompanied by the sensation of penetrating depths, but it may in fact be the action by which those supposed "depths" of the psyche are brought into being. This "penetration" and these "depths" assume a quasireligious aura when they are experienced in what one might call a "descendental" act. The moment is no less a religious one by virtue of the reversal in which we value demystifying "depths" rather than conventional transcendent heights. (30)

I will take the occasion of these references to Freud's reading of Oedipus Rex to return to the origins of psychoanalysis and a consideration of Freud's debt to literature. The literary history of confession will turn out to have contributed to Freud's founding case. Anna O.'s theatrical performance of hysteria and Freud's treatment of it would not be conceivable without the literary history of confession, with its eschatological dramas and neoclassical stagings. The critical position of psychoanalysis within my work will be similar to that described by Stephen Greenblatt in a recent essay on psychoanalysis and Renaissance culture: "Psychoanalytic interpretation seems to follow upon rather than to explain Renaissance texts. If psychoanalysis was, in effect, made possible by (among other things) the legal and literary proceedings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then its interpretive practice is not irrelevant to those proceedings, nor is it exactly an anachronism" (Curse 142).

By demonstrating in a few specific instances the debt of psychoanalysis to the literary and religious history of confession, I believe that we can fruitfully make use of a discourse that has always seemed so promising for literary studies yet has often been used to foreground entities of dubious interest: the psyche of the author or the reader, the psychopathology of characters, the Oedipal struggle of one text with its precursors, or the deconstruction of patriarchy by oppositional feminine voices within the text. Of these approaches, it is perhaps the last one that has the most merit in my eyes because, like the historical approach I intend to follow, it contests the scientific validity and objectivity of psychoanalysis and focuses attention on those passages in Freud that are the most open to a relativizing historicist critique.
As far as I know, Freud never commented on the works of Corneille or Racine or used them as a foil for psychoanalysis; so if we are to involve Freud in the "literary proceedings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," we must first look at the literary genealogy in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), which begins with Virgil and Sophocles and culminates with a famous work written in 1600. As everyone knows, Freud uses Hamlet to demonstrate the universality of the most important assumption of psychoanalysis: the incestuous desire every human being experiences as a child for the parent of the opposite sex and the murderous impulses this first love inspires. Freud makes one of the strongest and most influential literary interpretations in history by proposing that both Oedipus and Hamlet, separated by immense cultural and temporal distance, are the expression of an Oedipal conflict that every person experiences. The plays continue to move modern audiences because they represent a crime all men harbor in their hearts. Like Claudius and Gertrude, we are all caught in a timeless and universal Oedipal Mousetrap.

Freud's interpretation claims to undercut both Oedipus Rex and Hamlet. His reading uncovers an anthropological, ahistoric truth that the poets were only dimly aware of and that has lain dormant for twenty-five centuries to be discovered and formulated in all of its scientific exactness by Sigmund Freud. However, Freud's originality vis-à-vis the text of Sophocles is not so great as it appears. Freud fails even to mention the one character (Tiresias) who insists, with all the dogmatism of an analyst, on Oedipus's guilt: "You yourself are the pollution of this country... You, with both your eyes, are blind: / You can not see the wretchedness of your life" (18, 21). As Mark Edmundson has recently observed, "By eliminating the seer from his account, Freud removes the figure whose presence can provide some of the same insight into the play's action that he himself wishes to claim" (38). Freud strategically neglects the figure of analytic authority in the text in order to insist on his own originality. Thus psychoanalytic authority and originality at the expense of literature is less absolute than it seems. Psychoanalytic insights and positions are already there in the texts Freud interprets.

Edmundson even finds in Sophocles strong suggestions of another important contention of Freud's: that the desire of Oedipus represents
a universal human condition. It is my impression, however, that Freud borrowed as much if not more from _Hamlet_ in the construction of his main thesis and that his very interpretation of _Oedipus Rex_ was itself derived from the Renaissance dramaturgy present in _Hamlet_.

The idea that guilt resides in the spectator's conscience comes from the Mousetrap play. The idea that all men share the same kind of guilt is a variation on the Christian theme of Original Sin. Ubiquitous in _Hamlet_, this notion is nowhere to be found in _Oedipus_. The word *sin* appears in Freud's text when he evokes the different civilizations that produced the two plays: "Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish" (4:299, emphasis added).

The play shows how the reworking and restaging of a myth or fictive drama can be used to "catch the conscience of the King," an apt expression for the subjectivizing potential of drama. _Hamlet_ also contains an allegory of Freud refashioning Sophocles to create his own myth. By altering the Gonzago revenge play, as Freud creatively interprets _Oedipus_ and _Hamlet_ itself, Hamlet gains cultural and analytical power over his adversaries, who immediately following the play are reduced to probing their own consciences and seem to have caught Hamlet's disease. In short, it is my belief that _Hamlet_ was the real blueprint for the Oedipal theory and the "private theater" of psychoanalytic technique.

In _The Interpretation of Dreams_, Freud compares the work of psychoanalysis to the movement of the plot in _Oedipus Rex_: "The action of the play consists in nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement—a process that can be likened to the work of a psycho-analysis—that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius" (4:295). But if psychoanalysis is like a play, it is more like _Hamlet_ than _Oedipus_, more like a Renaissance drama of individual consciences that turns guilt inward rather than a collective scapegoating that culminates in the _sparagmos_ of the sacrificial victim. When Freud compares the cure to a play, and when Anna O. speaks of her private theater, they can both be talking only about _Hamlet_, a play written in the age when theater became private.

**Same Soil, Changed Treatment**

To examine these contentions further, let us begin with Freud's opening comments about the play: "_Hamlet_ has its roots in the same soil as
Oedipus Rex. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind" (4:298). The “two widely separated epochs” are marked not only by a “secular advance of repression” but also by the arrival of Christianity. As the tension between Freud’s “same soil” and “changed treatment” suggests, there are genealogical similarities and archaeological differences to be respected. To read Hamlet attentively is to be immediately aware that the play unfolds in a Christian atmosphere of universal guilt. All of the characters in the play are marked by this state of unhappy consciousness, to which Hamlet gives the most acute expression in his speech to Ophelia: “I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are errant knaves all; believe none of us” (3.1. 124–29).

To say of this state of affairs that civilization is marked by a secular advance of repression is to state only half of the truth: it is also characterized by a secular advance of confession. The play that inspires Freud’s Oedipal theory is a tragedy of surveillance and confession, a new kind of tragedy in which Greek anagnorisis has been displaced by Christian aveu.5

“Confess yourself to heaven”

To convince oneself of this new insistence on confession, one has only to listen to the play’s first sustained speech by the Ghost. The spirit of Hamlet’s father comes from a world similar to Dante’s Purgatorio. “Confined to fast in fires” until the guilt for his sins is “burnt and purged away,” the Ghost could tell a tale “whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul” (1.5). As is the case with several of Dante’s sinners, Hamlet’s father must expiate sins that his sudden death deprived him the opportunity of confessing. He died “Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneeled,” (1.5), that is, denied the sacraments of communion, confession, and extreme unction. Thus the impetus for all of the play’s action stems from the Ghost’s first confession and admonition to his son.

The rest of the plot is marked by the main characters’ attempts to make their adversaries confess. Hamlet is spied upon by Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern: “But with a crafty madness keeps aloof / When we would bring him on to some confession” (3.1); Hamlet exhorts
Gertrude, "Confess yourself to heaven" (3.4); Claudius is saved from being murdered when he attempts to "try what repentance can," and Hamlet postpones his revenge. _Hamlet_ is thus a world where action is inhibited as much by confession as by, as Freud claims, repression. Consciences are acutely aware of possibilities for action but stymied by inward-turning attempts to understand their own motives and those of others before acting.

### The Mousetrap

Hamlet manages to break out of the confessional network tightening around him. He understands that by altering a cultural spectacle, by adding a scene to the revenge play, he can unsettle the political and moral forces of Denmark. He outlines his dramaturgical principles in this speech:

... I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: If 'a do blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil: and the devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
More relative than this: the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

(2.2. 617–34)

This speech is really in an important sense the "germ cell of psychoanalysis." Hamlet assumes analytic power, a new secular position, which displaces both the religious power of the Ghost and the political power of the king. The spirit or the devil "hath power / T' assume a pleasing shape," but Hamlet, the new rational spirit, the Wittenberg-
educated Renaissance man, will pierce the courtly, imaginary world of contrived appearances, and "murder, though it have no tongue, will speak." A fictive creation, "something like the murder of my father;" something like *Oedipus Rex*, will focus guilt in the conscience of a spectator and force the king to proclaim his malefactions.

Hamlet's words are illustrative not only of Freud's debt to the dramaturgy and the world outlook of the Renaissance but also of the potential of psychoanalysis to both found and dismantle "the Oedipal representation of things," to use Tambling's phrase. By this play, Hamlet breaks with the patriarchal past represented by his father's ghost and the king; he uses literature to find the real guilty parties at court and to liberate himself from the weight of the past. But Freud also used this passage, in conjunction with *Oedipus Rex*, to project a universal crime upon all mankind. Reading Freud *à rebours* with *Hamlet* reveals that consciences are fictive projections and that man is free, ultimately, by an act of mythopoesis to alter the master texts of conscience.

"ACHERONTO MOVEBO"

*The Divine Comedy* can also be studied for its adumbrations of psychoanalysis. I have included Dante's masterpiece in this study primarily because it echoes, structurally, the great watershed event in the history of confession, the Lateran decree of 1215. In the figure of Minos standing "horrible, snarling" ("orribilmente, e ringhia") at the gates of Hell and imposing confession on all who enter ("tutta si confessa"), Dante has created a myth of the specifically Christian discourse of confession and profoundly altered the Greek and Roman scene of the judgment of the dead. Homer and Virgil's Minos, revered king and lawgiver of the Underworld, has been turned into a vindictive demon. Like the medieval inquisitors, he uses confession and torture to mete out divine justice. The myth of Minos also links Dante to Racine, whose greatest heroine was "la fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé" and whose conscience is burdened with the idea that "Minos juge aux enfers tous les pâles humains."

There are also generic affinities between Dante and the great dramatists of the seventeenth century. On the dramatic aspect of the *Comedia*, G. H. Grandgent has written: "In dealing with the individual, the dramatic method is preferred. The author lets his characters reveal themselves by their own words and deeds. From the time of the ancient Greeks to the age of Shakespeare, no playwright equaled Dante in
dramatic feeling or dramatic skill. For this reason, the epithet ‘Comedy,’ applied by the writer to his poem, has for us an appropriateness unsuspected by the giver” (305).

Dante's explicit model for his spiritual odyssey is in fact book 6 of Virgil's vast epic. This section of the Aeneid recounts the catabasis, the descent into Hades, where Aeneas meets his fallen comrades and consults with the shade of his father. The Comedia is not an epic of national destiny, like the Iliad or the Aeneid, but rather a compilation of confessions. In The Divine Comedy, because of the universal obligation to confess, every human being's life is subjected to narrativization. All men and women, not just epic heroes, have a story worth telling. The Divine Comedy is a “drama of selfhood,” to use Thomas M. Greene's suggestive formula.

The link with psychoanalysis is not as direct, but Freud's use of a line from the Aeneid—“Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronto movebo”—as an epigraph for The Interpretation of Dreams invites a comparative look at Dante. In a genealogical sense, Freud's Acheron, which he equates with the unconscious, shares certain crucial features with Dante's Underworld. If Freud's use of Hamlet implicates him in the literary proceedings of the seventeenth century, his reference to Virgil opens up another set of literary allusions that in the West runs through Dante. If Tiresias is the hidden figure of psychoanalytic authority in Oedipus, Dante's Minos is the implicit, unmentioned figure of analytic authority in Freud's Acheron.

“If I cannot bend the High Powers, I will move the Infernal Regions.” These are Juno's words after failing to gain the gods' support for her vendetta against Aeneas. If her Olympian peers will not second her efforts, she will stir up Acheron against the Trojan hero. Freud used this line both as an epigraph for The Interpretation of Dreams and as a model of dream formation near the end of the same work. The dream-thought is like Juno; denied access to conscious mental life, it must move the Underworld, find expression in the compromise formations of dreams and symptoms.

Jean Starobinski has recently explored all the richness of this single line from Virgil to bring out Freud's use of the text as a model for the psyche. By using this line as an image of intrapsychic conflict, Freud went beyond the neurological and dynamic models of mental process prevalent in his day and invented a linguistic model of the mind. Virgil's movere suggests both “physical movement and a dramatic plot” for Starobinski (“Acheronta” 286). The psyche is structured like a play because
its inner struggles do not function like the reflex arc but, rather, like the slow delaying tactics employed by Juno, which are narrative in nature. The unconscious evades censorship and expresses its desires by a continual plotting against the higher powers of consciousness.

The map of the mind that Freud developed thus owes more to textual analogies than it does to physics, as is stated in the Studies on Hysteria: "The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection" (2:160–61).

Starobinski begins his essay on Freud and Virgil by citing a letter from Freud to Wilhelm Fliess on the plot of The Interpretation of Dreams:

The whole thing is planned on the model of an imaginary walk. First comes the dark wood of the authorities (who cannot see the trees), where there is no clear view and it is easy to go astray. Then there is a cavernous defile through which I lead my readers—my specimen dream with its peculiarities, its detail, its indiscretions and its bad jokes—and then, all at once, the high ground and the open prospect and the question: "Which way do you want to go?" ("Acheronta" 273)

The literary critic notes the epic overtones of this passage ("The progress, in epic poetry, moves toward a discovery, the founding of a city, by means of difficult stages and combats"[273]) and then goes on to discuss the Virgilian intertext. But how can one not be struck by the parallel between Freud's "dark wood" where it is "easy to go astray" and Dante's selva oscura? The cavernous defile of the specimen dream corresponds to Dante's passage through Hell and Purgatory culminating in the equivalent of the specimen dream—his own confession at the end of the Purgatorio, which leads all at once to high ground, to mastery over self and the text. In the end, both Freud and Dante emerge as original authors confirmed in their poetic gifts after having risked their own subjectivity and included it in the matter of their work.

If, as Starobinski convincingly argues, the dream-thought behaves like Juno in moving Acheron, is not the psychoanalyst most like the figures who oversee the Underworld: Minos who sits in judgment, and
Dante who records the cases he sees for posterity? Perhaps we have in these two figures, Dante and Minos, two faces of analytic authority, the despotic classifier of deviance and the poetic creator of a new self, to which I will add a third and final possibility: Beatrice, to whom Dante confesses at the end of the *Purgatorio*.

**THE VOICE OF BEATRICE**

In a departure from church practices in his day, Dante confesses his transgression to a woman. Perhaps such liberating moments would have been more frequent in the pages that follow—and perhaps the Oedipal, patriarchal mold would have been shattered more often—if there were more gender reversals in confessional scenes like this in Western literature. Perhaps there is a maternal confessional scene that offers alternatives to the grip of Minos.

The confession of the pilgrim at the end of the *Purgatorio* is the culminating event of his spiritual and poetic journey. He too must undergo confession before crossing over into Paradise. It is during this confessional scene at the end of the *Purgatorio* that he sees Beatrice for the first time. The first word that the voice of Beatrice addresses to the poet is his own name, "Dante, because Virgil leaves thee, weep not, weep not yet" [Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada, / non pianger anco, non piangere ancora] (30.55–56). For the first time, the poet is actually called by the name of Dante and his precursor-guide leaves him. It is thus through this noncanonical confession that the poet claims a name for himself as author of the *Divine Comedy*. The Christian ritual of self-accusation gives access to a source of inspiration unknown to the pagan poets.

Dante is called by his proper name and not the repressive, castrating *nom du père*. Beatrice then admonishes Dante to look straight at her and likewise announces her own proper name: "I am, I am indeed Beatrice" [Ben son, ben son Beatrice] (30.73). The exchange of names that begins Dante's confession is a promise of renewed hope. Dante's name signifies his birth as an author, and Beatrice's name shows the regenerative potential of the self from earthly beauty to heavenly glory.

But in his shame Dante cannot sustain her gaze and looks downward, where he catches sight of his reflection in a pool: "My eyes fell down to the clear fount, but, seeing myself in it, I drew them back" (30.76–77). From rapt identification with the mother to narcissistic self-contemplation in the fountain, the self seeks a refuge that comes only
when its imaginary, visual identifications give way to entry into the Symbolic order. Dante makes this painful entry into language with a barely audible yes: “Confusion and fear mingled together drove forth from my mouth a ‘Yes’ such that to hear it there was need of sight” (31.13–15). A yes that needed eyes to be read. The maternal gaze reads the lips of the son as he passes into language, intuits a yes, not a no, a first lesson that there is a language of the self that heals and transfigures.

The pilgrim then makes his actual confession: “Weeping, I said: ‘Present things with their false pleasure turned my steps as soon as your face was hid’” (31.34–36). After verbalizing his sin, he is washed in the river Lethe, which confers forgetfulness of past mistakes. Tears, the melting heart, and the cleansing, amnesic waters of Lethe signify a return to the maternal waters of birth.

The reader will recognize here Freudian and Lacanian themes of the progress of the ego from total identification with the mother, through narcissism, to the acquisition of a proper name. The maternal, poetic name, the barely audible yes, seems to offer creative, utopian alternatives to the *nom du père*. 