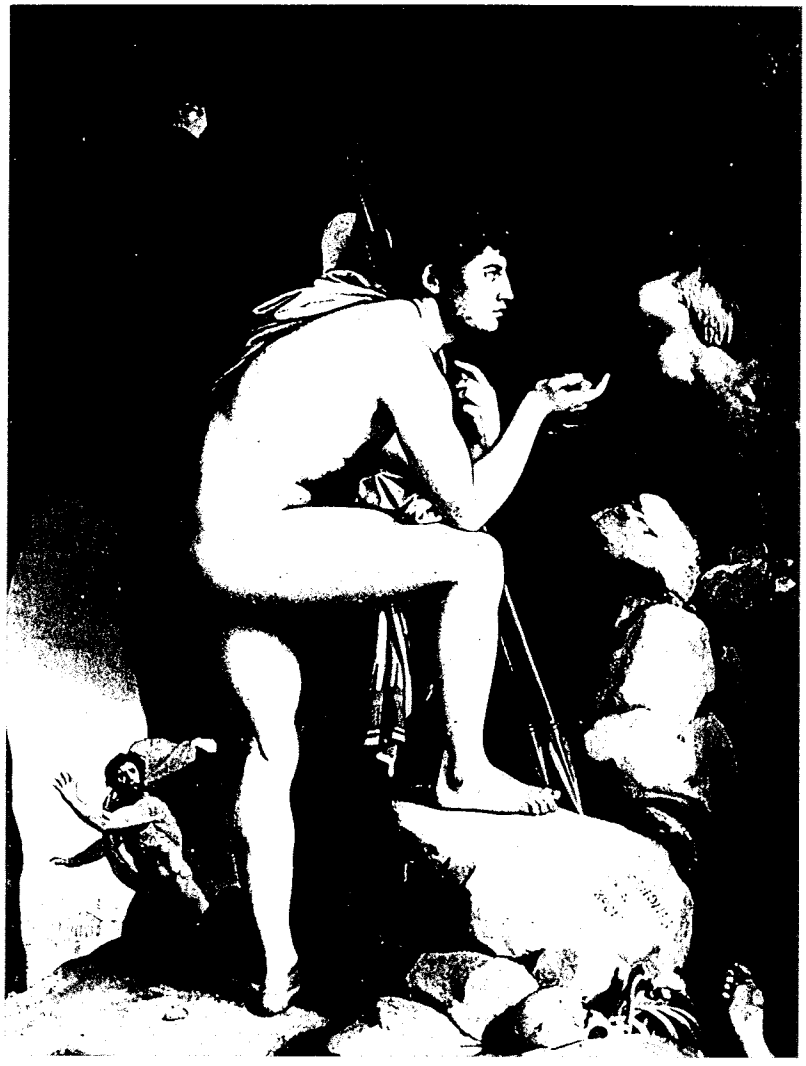

INGRES,

OEDIPUS SOLVING

THE RIDDLE OF

THE SPHINX (1808)

THE OEDIPUS MYTH: BEYOND THE RIDDLES OF THE SPHINX

LAURA MULVEY

Riddles of the Sphinx was made in 1976-7. The film used the Sphinx as an emblem with which to hang a question mark over the Oedipus complex, to illustrate the extent to which it represents a riddle for women committed to Freudian theory but still determined to think about psychoanalysis radically or, as I have said before, with poetic license. *Riddles of the Sphinx* and *Penthesilea*, our previous film, used ancient Greece to invoke a mythic point of origin for Western civilization, that had been critically re-affirmed by high culture throughout our history. Both ancient Greek civilization and the Oedipus complex imply a before/after dichotomy; both imply an evolution towards patriarchy. For me, as someone whose interest in psychoanalytic theory was a direct off-shoot of fascination with the origins of women's oppression, this dual temporality was exciting. Perhaps there was an original moment in the chronology of our civilization that was repealed in the chronology of each individual consciousness. Leaving aside the temptation to make a schematic analogy between the earlier culture of mother goddesses and the pre-Oedipal, the idea of a founding moment, either of consciousness or civilization, suggests that it might be possible to modify or change the terms on which civilization is founded within each individual consciousness and thus challenge the origins of patriarchal politics and theory.

These Utopian dreams now belong to more than ten years ago. In the meantime, the relation between feminism and psychoanalysis has become infinitely more complex and less instrumental. But some primitive attraction to the fantasy of origins, a Gordian knot that would suddenly unravel, persisted for me in the Oedipus story, and its special status: belonging to very ancient mythology and to the literature of high Greek civilization, chosen by Freud to name his perception of the founding moment of the human psyche. My interest then concentrated on breaking down the binarism of the before/after opposition, by considering the story as a passage through time, a journey that could metaphorically open out or stretch the Oedipal trajectory through significant details and through its formal, narrational, properties.

In 1986-7, I returned to the Oedipus story. My intention was to consider the story in the light of different disciplines and from different angles. Whereas in *Riddles of the Sphinx*, our intention had been to shift narrative perspective to the mother in the Oedipal triangle, this time, my intention was rather to discover things that the story itself suggested through its mode of telling and then through the theoretical work on narrative that could be brought to bear on its narrative structures; and to consider whether the signifiers of narration were linked to its signified, whether, that is, certain kinds of material demanded certain modes of telling. The first part of the paper (in two sections) is about the core Oedipus story. Then there is a digression about the metaphors of space and time that negotiate shifts between the poetics of psychoanalysis and narrativity. The final part (also in two sections) stretches out the core of the Oedipus story to the moment of his death and the pre-history before his birth.

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OEDIPUS: THE CORE STORY

Freud re-tells the Oedipus myth in the following manner:

> *Oedipus, son of Laius, king of Thebes, and to Jocasta, was exposed as an infant because an oracle had warned Laius that the still unborn infant would be his father's murderer. The child was rescued and grew up as a prince in an alien court, until, in doubt as to his origin, he too questioned the oracle and was warned to avoid his home since he was destined to murder his father and take his mother in marriage. On the road leading away from what he believed to be his home, he met King Laius and slew him in a sudden quarrel. He came next to Thebes and solved the riddle set him by the Sphinx who barred his way. Out of gratitude the Thebans made him their king and gave him Jocasta's hand in marriage. He reigned long in peace and honour and she, who unknown to him, was his mother, bore him two sons and two daughters. Then, at last a plague broke out and the Thebans made inquiry once more of the oracle. It is at this point that the Sophocles tragedy opens. The messenger brings back the reply that the plague will cease when the murderer of Laius has been driven from the land.*
>
> *But he, where is he? Where shall now be read*
> *The fading record of this ancient guilt?*
>
> *The action of this play consists of nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever mounting excitement - a process that can be likened to the work of psychoanalysis - that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius, but further that he is the son of the murdered man and of Jocasta. Appalled by the abomination*

which he himself has unwittingly perpetrated, Oedipus blinds himself and forsakes his home. The oracle has been fulfilled. [1]

From a structural point of view, the story, as it is told above, is separated into two parts according to two codes of narration.

This formal division implies that the story is a hybrid; or rather, its hybrid form indicates that it has come into being across transitional material that cannot be contained within a unified narrational system. It functions as a pivot. Roland Barthes, in *S/Z*, analyses the codes of narrative and distinguishes two as irreversible in time, propelling the story forward point by point, from its beginning to its end. The proairetic is the code of action. It governs events in sequence, on a cause and effect basis. It is, in Barthes's words, the voice of empirics. The hermeneutic is the code of enquiry. It sets up an enigma, formulates the questions that ensue and holds an answer in suspense until the moment of its solution. It is, again in Barthes's words, the voice of truth. Whereas the proairetic code functions on a single, linear temporal level, the hermeneutic folds back on the past and contains two levels of temporality. Although the two codes are very commonly interwoven, the chronological split in the Oedipus story according to these two codes is striking.

1 The Proairetic Code

The structure of the first part of the story conforms in broad outline to Vladimir Propp's analysis of a type of folk narrative in *The Morphology of the Folktale*. The dramitis personae perform a series of fixed and given actions as the hero travels along the course of a journey from home, arriving unknown at a new and future home where he performs a difficult task (for instance, he rescues the people or a princess from a monster or dragon). He is then rewarded with the kingdom and the hand of the princess in marriage. His actions, and those of the helpers or enemies that he meets on the way, take the story forward within a chronologically linear time. The linearity of the narrative is reflected in the linearity of the journey as it moves through time and space; the journey space of the road the hero takes also represents a passage through time, from departure to arrival. Thus the formal aspect of the story is materialised in its serial events and its imagery of *mise en scène*. The journey also represents a social space. The hero is transformed from one status to another, as though the story reflected, in narrative form, a rite of passage. The hero, Oedipus, leaves the security of his home in Corinth as an exceptional but untried young man, to encounter hurdles and cross boundaries as an adventurer in a liminal space and without recognised name or identity. His journey takes him out of youth into maturity, out of anonymity into recognition, from unmarried to married status, from lone individual in doubt as to his name and parentage

into the possession of property and power. The spatial metaphor of the journey as transition is joined by the spatial metaphor of the social pyramid: the hero ascends the apex and becomes king.

Freud recounts a similar series of events in his essay 'On creative Writing and Day-dreaming,' in which he condenses the "erotic and ambitious" aspirations of the ego (as hero of the psyche) with the presence of the invulnerable hero of popular fiction. The day-dream also tells of a transition in space and time and social status, but in Freud's example the hero's upward mobility takes place in an urban, bourgeois milieu.

> *He is given a job, finds favour with his new employer, makes himself indispensable in the business, is taken into the employer's family, marries the charming young daughter of the house, and then becomes a director of the business, first as his employer's partner and then as his successor.*

In this fantasy, the dreamer has regained what he possessed in his happy childhood, the protecting house, the loving parents, the first objects of his affectionate feelings. "It seems to me, that through this revealing characteristic of invulnerability, we can immediately recognise His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every day-dream and every story."[2]

(Perhaps Dick Whittington mediates between the peasant hero of the Proppian folk-tale and Freud's bourgeois scenario.) Freud notes the symmetry between the home left and the home acquired. However, the Oedipus story has a different twist. Oedipus arrives at Thebes only apparently as an unknown outsider. With a deeper symmetry, he has arrived at his own true home, and, instead of inheriting through marriage and from his father-in-law, he inherits the kingdom to which he is patrilineally entitled. At the simplest level, the folk tale pattern celebrates a transition to maturity similar to that of a rite of passage; on another level it reflects day-dreams of social aspiration in a society in which wide separation of wealth and power divide the propertied from the dispossessed. Both levels together condense family relations and property relations, as though the word 'possession' were a key that could turn either way between the psychoanalytic and the social.

Concentrating on the 'ambitious and erotic' aspects of the day-dreaming ego's consciousness, Freud overlooks the Oedipal, unconscious aspects of his paradigm day-dream. The hero recognizes by leaving home that to 'become the father' he must avoid his own Oedipal set-up, which invites rivalry and desire, but particularly rivalry with the father. If the journey then represents escape into exogamous kinship relations, *kingship* and possession bring back a memory of Oedipal rivalry. With its Oedipal twist, the repressed returns. The day-dreaming ego's consciousness is faced with the ultimate horror, and hope beyond expression, that the poor parents you leave will return in the form of the king or king substitute and his daughter who are waiting for you to rescue them at the end of your

journey. There are also echoes here of the social complexity of family romance. In a footnote about his own Revolutionary Dream[3] Freud notes:"A prince is known as the father of his country; the father is the oldest, first, and for children the only authority. And, indeed, the whole rebellious content of the dream, with its *lese-majeste* and its derision of higher authorities went back to rebellion against my father." This quotation carries the question of property and social status, the desire to become the father by avoiding conflict with him, to possibly radical undertones to Oedipal rivalry. The son is the dispossessed and thus liable to identify with rebellion against the possessing powers that be, an aspect, perhaps, of the short term radicalism of youth.[4]

For Propp, the Oedipus story is a symptom of a social and historical transition that determines the transitional or hybrid content of the narrative material itself. The early folktale structure is a reflection of an ancient marriage pattern.

> *The usual order of events in the fairy tale reflects matrilocal marriage, the entry of the bridegroom into the bride's family... Now let us see what happens to Oedipus. Just like the fairy tale hero, he is sent away from home. But after his upbringing he does not go to the country of his future wife. Rather, unbeknownst to himself, he returns to the home of his father. As a hero of the new patriarchal order he heads for his father's family, the family where he belongs, rather than his wife's family. This shift in Oedipus' destination represents a turning-point in the history of the tale. At this point Oedipus diverges from the fairy tale and forms a new offshoot, a new tale within the framework of the same compositional scheme.*[5]

Propp then points out that Oedipus goes through the same three adventures as the fairy tale hero. He kills the old king, he solves the riddle of the Sphinx and rids the city of distress, he receives the hand of the queen.

> *According to patriarchal ideas, the heir could not ascend the throne during the life time of the old king...Under the matriarchal system, on the contrary, the heir appears as the daughter's husband first, and then the old king is removed, or as the fairy tale has it, shares the kingdom with his son-in-law. Hence in the fairy tale the proclamation comes from the old king himself, while in the Oedipus it comes from the citizens of Thebes who have lost their king.*

In Propp's terms, the change of sequence whereby the old king is killed, by his own son, before the difficult task is performed, is one mark of the transitional, historical nature of the Oedipus story. Writing in the Soviet Union, as a scholar of folk tale and anthropology, Propp was looking for a historical materialist explanation of the Oedipus story. But he, too, comes up with a story of *origins*, the origin of patriarchal inheritance. And it is revealing that he is *only* interested in the part of the story that is under the aegis of the proairetic code.

In Freudian terms, Propp's explanation takes the story inexorably back, in its transitional mode, to father-son rivalry and the incest taboo which lie at the core of the Oedipus complex. The question of property and inheritance is of primary importance to Propp, confirming the story's grounding in the social. But the father's attempt at infanticide has disordered the true line of inheritance, and opened up the way for incest to return by an oblique route, the folk tale pattern. Heroism and apotheosis through achievements, coalesce with blood legitimacy, so that the hero is bound to commit incest in order to reclaim his patrimony in this hybrid or pivotal story. Although Propp's emphasis on the matrilocal is clearly at several moves from Bachofen's *Mutterecht* or Engel's *Origins of Private Property and the Family*, there is a residual, suggestive link with forms of social organization in which patriarchy was not supremely in command. The misty, forgotten epics of time and mythology in which things might have been other for women return as a ghostly presence. Propp's interpretation acknowledges the coming of an era in which the exchange of women as signifier of relations between men, takes on a new inflection in relation to property and inheritance. Teresa de Lauretis,[6] in her powerful narrative and topological analysis of the Oedipus story (to which these observations are indebted) emphasises the essential masculinity of its folk-tale structure. The hero spans the space of the story and commands the action (the proairetic code). The feminine principle is static, represented either by the Sphinx or the Princess, Jocasta. She is a resistance, a boundary to be crossed, a space of enclosure. It is clear that the hero represents an active force of masculinity, or perhaps, the *rite de passage* of *mensch* and thus *man* as the universal point of reference under patriarchy, and the subject position is definitely that of the male child. However both the parent functions are *other*, that of the father as much as that of the mother. And in the Oedipus story, it is the father's response to the oracle's prophecy, "your son shall kill you" that disorders the family structure and generates his son's future trajectory as hero and its tragic consequences. The social-historical problem of inheritance, the narrative structure of myth, and the trajectory of the individual psyche meet at a crossroads.

2 The Hermeneutic Code

At a particular point in his narration of the Oedipus story, Freud says: "Here Sophocles" tragedy begins. The aesthetics of Greek drama, its commitment to the unities of time, place and action as well as the constraints of performance, would all tend to the replacing of the first part of the myth within a containing formal structure. Sophocles folds the horizontal, chronologically linear materialisation of that narrative, realized in the spatial pattern of a journey (also a journey through time and a rite of passage through the social space and time

of liminality) within another narrative code, the hermeneutic. However, this is not a simple story-teller's decision, or a purely formal device. The unravelling of the enigma is essential to the Oedipus story in its own right; and the formal narrational pattern that the hermeneutic code generates is a key to the ultimate meaning if the play. Not only does the old mystery of Oedipus's true parentage remain unsolved between the two parts of the story but a murder has been committed and the criminal must be revealed. The play proceeds to follow through a sequence of enigmas, in which the actions of the first part of the story are transformed into clues or bits of evidence out of which the truth will ultimately be disclosed. In this process Oedipus takes on the role of investigator. But it only gradually emerges that he is telling his own story, revealing, as detective hero, the hidden meaning behind his actions as the hero of the folk-tale.

The play opens with a generative enigma that activates all the subsequent inquiries. Thebes is inflicted with a plague and Oedipus undertakes to find out why. He is confident of his abilities; he has become king as a result of his intelligence, his riddle-solving powers. This fact, too, pre-figures his future and separates him from heroes who depend on physical strength to conquer a monster.

But I came by. Oedipus the ignorant, I stopped the Sphinx!
with no help from the birds, the flight of my own intelligence hit the mark.[7]

The oracle offers a clue to the mystery and sets up another. The murderer of Laius must be found.

"No! I'll start again - I'll bring it all to light myself!" [8]

At the beginning of the play Teiresias, the seer, gives the true answer to the murder mystery. Oedipus responds bitterly, in an excess of anger that speaks simultaneously of the necessity for delay within the hermeneutic code, the processes of resistance and negation in psychoanalysis, and the quick temper Oedipus inherited from his father. In order to reassure him, Jocasta recounts the old prophecy, that Laius would be killed by his son, and describes the circumstances of his death "where the three roads meet". Oedipus recognises the description. and knows he is himself the murderer. From that moment on, he is not so much a regal, or legal, investigator as a man desperately seeking the truth of his own family origins and the meaning of his actions. But as the evidence accumulates inexorably, Oedipus still resists, bearing out Teiresias's warning:

You with your precious eyes,
you're blind to the corruption of your life,
to the house you live in, those who love with -
who are *your parents? Do you know? All unknowing*
you are the scourge of your own flesh and blood....[9]

After Jocasta's suicide he sees the meaning of his life for the first time, in all its unwitting horror and perversity. He blinds himself and leaves the city. The story part of the story thus strips away the folk-tale's happy ending; the hero's material apotheosis, marriage, power and property are revealed to be worthless illusions.

The second part of the story is thus necessarily posited on the code of mystery and investigation. The *locus classicus* of the hermeneutic code, the detective story, only developed formally as a genre comparatively recently. Oedipus, ahead of the genre, acts as a detective faced with a murder to solve, and the hybrid, two-part story acquires another formal duality, that of time.

According to Tvestan Todorov, the detective story, and particularly its "whodunit" mode, is always based on a double time structure. There are two stories to be told. The first precedes the opening of the narrative and is the story of the crime. This story is gradually unfolded in the course of the second which is the story of the investigation. The first story cannot be completed until the identity of the criminal is revealed by the process of detection. As Michel Butor, cited both by Todorov and by Peter Wollen, has his detective story writer say in *Passing Time*:

> *The narrative superimposes two temporal levels: the days of investigation that begin with the crime, the days of drama that lead up to it.*

The two levels of time entail a metaphysical shift from action to thought that is foreshadowed, in Oedipus's case, by the nature of his encounter with the riddling Sphinx, a monster, but one that can only be defeated by intelligence. The power of the hero's actions in the proairetically dominated folk-tale pattern, is replaced by the power of the law. The struggle between hero and monster is replaced by a struggle between a criminal and the law's representative. The heroic adventure is replaced by the inexorable process of justice. The rite of passage is replaced by the theme of morality. And whereas the folk-tale type story is about the acquisition of power and property the second part of the story is about the acquisition of self-knowledge. The popular, oral, folk-tale tradition, with its emphasis on function (in Propp's terms) gives way to a literary genre that depends on the decipherment of clues and suspense, for its mode of narration. Todorov describes the work done by narrational codes within detective fiction. Thus, he says, story A tells what really happened and story B tells how the narrator, and so the reader, gets to know about it. He invokes the distinction made by Russian formalist critics between story (fable) and plot (subject):

> *In the story there is no inversion of time, actions follow their natural order; in the plot the author can present results before their causes, the end before the beginning.* [10]

The plot consists of the orchestrated accumulation of evidence, of clues that have to be found and interpreted, remnants and traces of past action. Memory and the testimony of witnesses

must play a crucial part in this process. In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus is shown to be a determined investigator, armed at first with the righteousness and the responsibilities of kingship. Later, as a desperate man in a position of power, he investigates with anger and cruelty, especially when his witnesses are poor and defenceless, like the shepherd who rescued him in his infancy. Class position plays ironically with our foreknowledge of Oedipus's own ultimate fate. But it is still the process of his investigation and his knowledge that control narrative development. The act of narration is inseparable from the detective form itself, and the writer, the ultimate literary narrator, controls the readers' knowledge or suspense through the process of the hero's investigation and discovery. It is here that the Oedipus story, once again, both works within a given narrative code and represents a twist, a deviation from a particular composition's scheme (Propp's term). In this case, the detective is himself the criminal. Propp argues that the shift in the chronology of functions in the Oedipus story transforms the tale into a transitional model within the folk-tale and the proairetic code; *Oedipus Rex* takes the detective genre into wider questions of the unconscious. What is at stake on this level of narration is not just the ability of an exceptional man to interpret clues and evidence, but the ability of man to understand the truth of his own history. As Freud says, the play unfolds 'like the process of psychoanalysis itself'. The relationship between the Oedipus myth and psychoanalysis, therefore, lies in its narrative methodology and the metaphysical implications of its narrative form, in addition to the overt content of the story (rivalry with the father and desire for the mother) that first attracted Freud's attention.

I have emphasised the popular, detective structure of the narrative pattern in *Oedipus Rex* rather than its place as literary tragedy to highlight the importance of clues, riddles and enigmas that link Oedipus figuratively with the clues, riddles and enigmas of the unconscious that psychoanalysis deciphers. Teiresias is also a seer who deciphers riddles and is linked as a hybrid, a hermaphrodite, with the Sphinx. Oedipus conquers the Sphinx in the final moments of his heroic story; she "returns" in the shape of Teiresias at the opening of *Oedipus Rex*. Teiresias "returns" in the image of the blind Oedipus "seeing" the truth as he exiles himself from the city he won by his victory over the Sphinx. The folk-tale hero's journey is resolved in the material world with material success; the detective undertakes an investigation in pursuit of knowledge in the name of the Law; the hero of *Oedipus Rex* finds himself thrown into an inferno of self-discovery through which he will understand his origins, his fate and, ultimately, have the possibility of redemption. The hero's triumphant apotheosis, achieved with the answer "man", turns sour and the detective's search for a criminal inaugurates a metaphysical journey. The literal space of the road has been replaced by an abstract journey into the self. The horizontal continuum of the proairetically based plot has changed direction into the self which then must precipitate an excavation into the

past. The axis of exploration shifts between space and time. But time attracts figures of space: of the layering of history, on top, as it were, of the spatial layers of geological time.

3 Below the Surface: Time and Space

Freud described the unconscious in terms of topology, using spatial figures and images to evoke the relation between a surface consciousness and the stuff of repression, hidden from consciousness, that could only be investigated or excavated obliquely. Signs and symptoms bear witness to the continuous presence of psychopathology, and to the working of the unconscious in the present tense, as a living monument to the past the traumatic experiences of childhood. Things that are concealed from surface consciousness have roots in the past. It is perhaps at least of poetic interest that Freud's world, the second half of the nineteenth century, saw the growth of two cultural phenomena that both bear a relation to these two levels and to the structure of the Oedipus myth as we inherit it. These two phenomena are the development of archaeology and the development of the detective story as a popular literary genre. *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins, generally considered to be the first example of the detective genre, was published in 1868. During the 1860s Schliemann excavated Troy. (Freud was born in 1856.) Both the detective story and archeology dig into lost or concealed worlds; in one case it is the mystery of an urban underworld that is revealed, in the other it is the lost cities of antiquity that are brought to light. The two tropes condense in the contemporary connotations of the Oedipus story and also suggest figures for the topology of the unconscious, a concealed layer in the psyche, and the process of investigation, psychoanalysis, which interprets them.

In his reminiscence of Freud, the Wolf Man says:

> *Once we happened to speak of Conan Doyle and his creation Sherlock Holmes. I had thought Freud would have no use for this type of light reading matter and was surprised to find that he had read this author attentively. The fact that circumstantial evidence is useful in psychoanalysis when reconstructing a childhood history may explain Freud's interest in this type of literature.* [11]

It is tempting to see the detective story as the myth or legend of the newly constituted industrial cities that had grown up *outside* order. The nether world of the city, seething with bars, prostitutes and criminals, also the uncontrollable presence of the working class, could provide a mythic terrain for scenarios of adventure and constitute a modern space of liminality similar to the no man's land through which the heroes of antiquity travelled. But whereas the ancient or the folk-tale heroes embarked on a linear journey outside the city space, the journey of the urban detective is a descent into a hidden world of what is repressed by

bourgeois morality and respectability to decode and decipher signs and restore order through the process of reason. This sense of spatial *mise en scene* is familiar, too, in the Hollywood movie genre *film noir*, and suggests a link between such a descent into the nether world and the hero's rite of passage that condenses the liminal space of adventure and the abstract journey of self discovery:

> *What [*film-noir *screen-plays] share in adaptation to the screen is the tendency to organise the unfolding of an enigma as a single character's initiation into an alien world; they present a process of psychological upheaval that is manifest in verbal, behavioural, and physiological signs as well as in certain optical/perceptual changes projected onto the environment. It is the* process *of change, the transition, which constitutes the ground of film-noir narrative. Whether or not the "first story" is suppressed in favour of a narrating investigator there is a consistent stress on internal transformation - in all its ramifications - incited through participation in a criminal milieu, on the slippage of personal identity and its reassumption in unintegrated form.* [12]

Rites of passage, celebrated in narrative, find an appropriate diegesis, a contemporary scenario for self-discovery and transition. The Oedipus story brings together the two narrative forms to transform achievement through action into self-discovery. This evolution takes the Oedipus model out of a primary emphasis on its immediate content, patricide and incest, and raises formal questions about the way that the signifier of narration affects a story's signified. These images and processes of popular mythology relate, by analogy, to psychoanalysis. The topological space of the city, its dark, after-hours underworld, echoes Freud's topology of the psyche. The journey and its narration parallel the process by which unconscious material is transformed.

The Oedipus story emanated from Mycenae, a civilisation that could barely be discerned beyond the lost years of the Dark Ages (as those centuries would still have seemed to Freud's generation). In its apotheosis as *Oedipus Rex*, the myth became part of the literary legacy of classical, historical Greece, suspended between the timelessness of culture and the remoteness in a specific historical period that is taken to be the origins of Western civilisation. Freud is well known to have been fascinated to the point of obsession with the remnants of ancient civilisations. He collected antiquities and his visits to Rome and Athens were crucial experiences in his life. Again, the Wolf-Man tells us:

> *In the weeks before the end of my analysis, we often spoke of the danger of the patient's feeling too close a tie to the therapist...In this connection, Freud was of the opinion that at the end of a treatment, a gift from the patient could contribute, as a symbolic act, to lessening his feeling of gratitude and consequent dependence on the*

physician. So we agreed that I would give Freud something as a remembrance. As I knew his love for archaeology, the gift I chose for him was a female Egyptian figure, with a mitre-shaped head-dress. Freud placed it on his desk. Twenty years later, looking through a magazine, I saw a picture of Freud at his desk. "My" Egyptian immediately struck my eye, the figure which for me symbolised my analysis with Freud, who himself called me "a piece of psychoanalysis." [13]

Freud used the image provided by the burial of the ancient world as a metaphor for the topology of the unconscious and Pompeii, buried so suddenly by a volcanic eruption, provided him with a particularly vivid example. Analysing Jensen's story *Gradiva*, he was fascinated by the author's use of Pompeii to evoke both the repression and the preservation of childhood desire, its mis-recognition and ultimate excavation. In his notes on his analysis of the Rat Man he says:

I then made some short observations on the psychological differences between the conscious and the unconscious, and the fact that what was conscious was subject to the process of wearing away, while what was unconscious was relatively unchanging. I illustrated my remarks by pointing at the antiquities standing about in my room. They were, in fact, only objects found in a tomb and their burial had been their preservation. The destruction of Pompeii was only beginning now that it had been dug up. [14]

The detective story is a narrative that carries the hero into another space, a nether world. Exploration of this space depends on a re-telling of events, the investigation of an immediate past, that lies within the experience of the characters involved in the drama. This, as argued above, is also the narrative pattern of *Oedipus Rex*. Archaeology depends on the preservation of actual objects in time, and the fossilisation of these objects in a medium that preserves their reality intact. In semiological terms, its signs are indexical. They come to the surface as a challenge to the erosion of time and provide a point of contact with, and traces of, a remote and almost lost epoch. Detection too, makes use of indexical signs in the traces and clues which have to be interpreted and read to make sense. This leads, once again, to the psychoanalytic process. Lacan takes the analogy with archaeology its indexical traces one step further:

[The unconscious] is the censored chapter. But the truth can be rediscovered: usually it has been written down elsewhere.

Namely:

- monuments: this is my body. The hysterical nucleus of a neurosis in which the hysterical symptom reveals the structure of a language. Deciphered like an inscription, which once recovered, can without serious loss be destroyed;

- in archival documents: these are my childhood memories, just as impenetrable as are such documents when I do not know their provenance;
- in semantic evolution: this corresponds to the stock of words and acceptations of my own particular vocabulary, as it does to my style of life and to my character;
- in traditions, too, and even in the legends which in a heroicised form, bear my history:
- and, lastly, in the traces that are inevitably preserved by the distortions necessitated by linking the adulterated chapter to the chapters surrounding it, and whose meaning will be established by my exegesis. [15]

There is an interesting co-incidence between the indexical signs cited by Lacan and those cited by historians as the only means of retrieving the culture of the Dark Ages of antiquity across cultural amnesia and a total lack of historical records. These were the traces left by objects recovered in archaeology, the dialects and forms of language that persisted though geographically dispersed, and the legends that were handed on orally through a period of time that had no written language. The exegesis can only come into being in the final historical narration. It is obviously this point that interests Lacan:

What we teach the subject to recognise as his unconscious is his history - that is to say, we help him to perfect historicisation of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical turning-points in his existence. [16]

So, what is specific about Oedipus, the crucial issue that separates him from the simple detectives of the whodunit, is the theme of internal transformation which,????????, relates him to the modern, post-psychoanalytic, heroes-in-crises of the *film noir*. The story he investigates is his own, he is the criminal in his detective story. The evidence and clues he compiles all pile up against him but also allow him to see his own history, to go through the process of recognition and understand "the historical turning-points in his existence".

Lacan then returns again to antiquity, to the Athenian drama which he describes as: the original myths of the city state and the "material" through which a nation today learns to read the symbol of destiny on the march. He moves away from the question of narration in an individual analysis to collective fantasies narrated in culture. He has thus traced a triple relationship: between fossilised indexical evidence left as remnants of the past, the process of psychoanalysis that interprets these traces (as practised in relation to individuals) and the collective construction of history and mythology. In the shift from Freud to these points of Lacan's, another shift is contained. That is, the shift between the matter of the Oedipus story as it relates to the Oedipus complex (the incestuous and murderous fantasies of a small child) and the question of the structure of narration as a process of recognition both in an individual analysis and, then perhaps, in culture. For Lacan, of course, this is above all an issue of

the function of language and the symbolic, which allows raw, indexical, material to be transformed into words, to be narrated, and so transformed into something else. This issue, too, makes a dramatic appearance in Sophocles' second Oedipus play.

Ⓑ

1 The Ending: The Father's Legacy

After Oedipus left Thebes, the third traumatic departure of his life (he was expelled from Thebes as an infant; he left Corinth in search of his true parentage), he wandered in poverty and great mental and physical suffering, accompanied only by his daughter, Antigone. Sophocles starts the play *Oedipus at Colonus* at the moment when they arrive at a little wood, outside Athens, that is sacred to the Eumenides. Oedipus recognises the place where he is destined to die but is challenged by the local people who see his presence there as sacrilegious. Theseus, the king of Athens, is summoned while the people (the Chorus) question Oedipus and ask his name; it is he who is now subject to investigation and interrogation. When Oedipus finally speaks his name, the people react with fear and terror combined with fascination that Freud noted in contemporary reactions to *Oedipus Rex*, and that he used as evidence for the universality of the Oedipus complex. Then Ismene arrives, with the news of another oracle, again the third in Oedipus's life (the first precipitated his expulsion from Thebes by his father and then, when it was repeated to him, determined his decision to avoid Corinth and travel from Delphi towards Thebes; it was the second that instructed him to find the murderer of Laius and which sets in motion the investigative process of *Oedipus Rex*). This time the oracle promises that Oedipus will achieve a special transcendent power at the moment of his death, which he will be able to bestow on the people among whom he chooses to die. The Thebans, therefore, want him back, locked as they are in a war between the two sons, Polyneices besieging with a foreign army the city that is now under the control of Eteocles and their maternal uncle, Creon. The Chorus question Oedipus again. They want to hear his story, the most unspeakable story that they already know by hearsay. ("Your name, old stranger, echoes through the world.") As Oedipus tells the story, the events of his life are repeated for a third time, the events that he first enacted, then re-traced in investigation, he now recounts in his own words.[17] Theseus arrives and Oedipus promises to bestow the "blessing" of his death on him and his people. Creon arrives and when Oedipus denounces him bitterly, he threatens the two girls until Theseus intervenes to rescue them. Polyneices then arrives also in search of his father's mysterious power and this time Oedipus curses both his sons. Theseus returns and is alone allowed to accompany Oedipus to the moment of his

death. He dies in strange circumstances, leaving no body. Finally Antigone takes the decision to go back to Thebes to try to end the fratricidal war between her brothers.

The play has little complex action or narrative structure. It is about death, naming and inheritance. Thebes is falling into primal chaos, torn by fratricidal feud, outside history and lacking government. Athens is at the dawn of civilisation. There is, perhaps, an "invention of tradition" aspect to Sophocles' last play, written when he was in his nineties, at the end of the glorious fourth century, at a moment when Athens was itself under siege during the Peloponnesian War. Theseus is considered to be the legendary founder of the Athenian state; he organised the legal system, established a constitution and abdicated from the kingship. Oedipus's choice in bestowing his "blessing" on Athens, in preference to his own tragic city, takes on a particular cultural significance. From a Lacanian perspective, the story of Oedipus at Colonus can be interpreted as the story of the coming into being of the resolution of the Oedipus complex around the Name of the Father, the Law, and the Symbolic Order. Oedipus performed the different roles in the inter-generational drama out of phase by a generation. As a man, in the role of child, he acted out the Oedipal desire; then as child and father, he performs the act of symbolic castration, blinding himself and stripping himself of all power and possessions (usurped from his father). At Colonus, he arrives to meet his death purged and cleansed by suffering. At the end of *Oedipus Rex* he was polluted but now he has undergone yet another psychic metamorphosis:

> *Don't reject me as you look into the horror*
> *of my face, these sockets raked and blind.*
> *I come as someone sacred, someone filled*
> *with piety and power.*[18]

His power is no longer the material power of property and possessions or even the abstract power of the king as representative of the law who can solve mysteries in the Name of the Law. His power emanates from his unique identity as the emblematic embodiment of Oedipal desire; action transmuted by narrations the flesh, as it were, made Word. The Athenian legacy, personified by Theseus, confirms that the qualities of culture and civilisation that complement the incest taboo are these in Oedipus's gift of power. Realised by the old man, the child's experience is visibly born into culture and bequeathed to civilisation. This myth of origins, in which the incest taboo is an essential corollary to the law of social organisation, is central to both Levi-Strauss's and Lacan's concepts of the origins of culture;

> *The Oedipus is articulated in the forms of social institutions and of language of which the members themselves are unconscious - unconscious as to their meaning and, above all, to their origin. The Oedipal unconscious is homologous with all these symbolic structures. The Oedipus is the drama of the social being who must become a subject*

> *and who can only do so by internalising the social rules, by entering on an equal footing into the register of the symbolic, of Culture and of language...a development which presupposes the transition from nature into culture...we can say that the Oedipus is the unconscious articulation of a human world of culture and language; it is the very structure of the unconscious forms of society.*[19]

In an exquisitely mapped article, to which I cannot do justice here, Shoshana Felman argues a parallel development between *Oedipus Rex/Oedipus at Colonus* and *The Interpretation of Dreams/ Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In each case, the first work is about sexuality and Oedipal desire and the second is the compulsion to repeat and the death drive. It is the compulsion to repeat lived experience that generates symbolisation and consequently myth and narrative.

> *Oedipus* is born, *through the assumption of his death (of his radical self-expropriation)* into the life of his history. Oedipus at Colonus *is about the transformation of Oedipus' story into history: it does not tell the drama, it is* about the telling *and re-telling of the drama. It is, in other words, about the* historicisation *of Oedipus' destiny, through the* symbolisation— *the transformation into speech — of Oedipal desire.*[20]

She also argues that there is third transition in the sequence: the shift from Freud to Lacan in the history of the psychoanalytic movement. All these transitions represent a transmutation of Oedipal desire in which the place of the object of desire is taken by questions of language and symbolisation. (Lacan: "What we teach the subject to recognise as his unconscious in his history'.) Shoshana Felman argues that the generative force of psychoanalysis is characterised by the compulsion to repeat, itself characteristic of the drive. In analysis the analysand repeats, in words and narrative, lived experience and past events:"What is then, psychoanalysis if not, precisely a life-usage of the death instinct - a practical productive usage of the compulsion to repeat..." .

Peter Brooks has used *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* most illuminatingly to discuss the impact of the compulsion to repeat and the death drive on narrative. Repetition offers mastery over a state of loss and anxiety (as Freud noticed in his famous example of the game that he interpreted as a child's symbolisation, by means of a toy, of his mother's absence and imagined return):

> *An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both a recall of an earlier moment and a variation on it... Repetition creates a return in the text, a doubling back. We cannot say whether this is a return to, or a return of: for instance, a return to origins or a return of the repressed.*[21]

And:

We have a curious situation in which two principles of forward movement operate upon one another so as to create a retard...This might be consubstantial with the fact that a repetition can take us both backward and forward because these terms have become reversible: the end is a time before the beginning. [22]

The Oedipus story is punctuated with foretellings, tellings and retellings: the oracles foretell, Teiresias tells, at the beginning of *Oedipus Rex*, the story that Oedipus then has to piece together for himself, and that he then re-tells to the Chorus at Colonus. The story itself existed as a myth before its literary re-working by Sophocles, so it would have been well known to the Athenian audience to whom the play would have necessarily seemed a re-telling. The story has since been used and re-told many times. Levi-Strauss makes this point: "Not only Sophocles but Freud himself should be included among the Recorded versions of the Oedipus myth on a par with earlier or seemingly more authentic versions[23]. In the light of Levi-Strauss's interpretation of the Oedipus myth as about belief in the autochthonous origins of man, he strangely omits the hero's "rebirth" in the wilderness, shared with many other heroes such as Romulus, Moses, and Cyrus and commented on by Freud in "Moses and Monotheism" . The significance of the act of telling and of narrational patterns in the Oedipus story confirms the importance, dismissed by structuralism, of narrative in myth. Terence Turner has criticised Levi-Strauss's analysis of the Oedipus myth to draw attention to and reinstate the contribution of temporal structures ("the syntactic structures of narrative sequence") to the meaning of myth, alongside the component elements, the "bundles" that are central to Levi-Strauss structural analysis.

Myths do indeed provide synchronic models of diachronic processes, but they do this directly at the level of organisation as temporal sequences, through the correspondence between their sequential patterns and aspects of the diachronic processes they "model" . The unique mythical relationship between synchrony and diachrony, between historical events and timeless structure, must be sought in the way myth itself patterns time in the syntactic structure of its narrative; that is, in Levi-Strauss' own words "in the story which it tells." [24]

He brings out the link between narrative sequence as a structural element and the alternation between change and stasis in "traditional narrative genres" , in which a synchronic timelessness is disrupted by a sequentially patterned series of events, a diachronic disordering of stasis.

These observations have a bearing on what might be called the politics of narrative closure. Shoshana Felman argues that Lacan identified with the exiled Oedipus personally because of his expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association, and he identified with *Oedipus at Colonus*, theoretically, because of its relation to *Beyond the Pleasure Prin-*

ciple (the text that orthodoxy could not absorb) and because it tells not a mythic story but the story of the coming into being of a myth. This has some bearing on the openness of the implicit narration in psychoanalytic practice:

> *The psychoanalytic myth derives its theoretical effectiveness not from its truth value, but from its truth-encounter with the other; from its incapacity for passing through the other; from its openness that is to an expropriating passage of one insight through another; of one story through another; the passage for example of Oedipus the King through Oedipus at Colonus; of the passage of the myth of "Instinct" through this later and more troubling myth of "Death".* [25]

Narrative is outside history but related to it. Terence Turner's emphasis on change through disorder in narrative raises the problem of change in lived political narrative. The potential for change in the disordered middle is in dialectical opposition to the timeless stasis of the beginning and end. There is a similar "political poetics" inherent in Peter Brooks's return to, "return of" and "the end is before the beginning" ; and also in Shoshana Felman's perception of the compulsion to repeat and (what she calls) the "uncertainty principle" as safeguards new movements, such as psychoanalysis, fossilising into the timeless stasis of institutional authority. For a final word something of this aesthetic of permanent narration is present in Francois Roustang's observations on the difficulty of maintaining change within the psychoanalytic institution:

> *If one wants to be an analyst, one must analyse one's own transference to Freud, one must question his writings, which are not to be taken as the word of the Gospel but as a place where one's fantasies and desires are caught and projected along with Freud's. In this way, the trust we place in advance* (im Voraus) *in his works should become, through deferred action, both the uncertainty and the strength of our discourse.*[26]

One strange aspect of the Oedipus story is its lack of clear resolution in the normal narrative sense. The core story contained in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* ends with yet another departure, a return to the journey and liminality, threatening the security of every "and then they lived happily ever after'. *Oedipus at Colonus* ends with the death of the hero and the birth of his Symbolic Order. It is as if the presence of death, the ultimate point of timeless stasis that Peter Brooks has shown to be lying behind the drive to an ending, must be neutralised by the timeless stasis of paternal authority. There is, perhaps, a fundamental tension between the openness of narrative transformation and the censorship imposed by this authority. Of course, both lie within the Symbolic Order. But the father's place in the Lacanian Oedipus complex tips the balance in the personal direction; the Symbolic Order is born under his aegis. Or so it seems. Just before Oedipus dies, Sophocles introduces an incident that dra-

matically raises a ghost from the distant past, the compulsion to repeat comes to the fore in a violent return of the repressed.

2 The Beginning: the Son's Inheritance

Just as he had been cursed, just as his father had tried to murder him, Oedipus curses his own sons and condemns them to kill each other.

> *Die!*
> *Die by your own blood brother's hand-die-*
> *killing the very man who drove you out!*
> *So I curse your life out!*
> *I call on the dark depths of Tartarus brimming hate,*
> *where all our fathers lie, to hale you home!*
> *I cry to the great goddesses of this grove!*
> *I cry to the great god War*
> *who planted that terrible hatred in your hearts!*
> *Go! — with all my curses thundering in your ears-*
> *go and herald them out to every man in Thebes*
> *and all your loyal comrades under arms! Cry out*
> *that Oedipus has bequeathed these last rights,*
> *these royal rights of birth to both of his sons!*[27]

Quite apart from the question of the justice of Oedipus's attitude to his sons, or their previous behaviour to him, two elements return here, at the end of the story, that vividly invoke its beginning. First of all, Oedipus continues the curse on his family line and, second, as he nears his natural death, he had previously narrowly escaped being killed by his own father, first as a new born infant, and then, in the fateful encounter with Laius at the crossroad. He claims many times that the old man in the carriage would have killed him outright had he not defended himself ("the man I murdered-he'd have murdered me!"). Not only, then, does Oedipus's approaching death bring to mind his father's attempts to kill him, thus evoking Laius's presence in the story, but his father's character returns to haunt Oedipus's relation to his own sons.

Oedipus at Colonus is based on the legend that Sophocles' own birthplace, Colonus, was the place where Oedipus had died. The events and narrative structure are more literary than mythic, so that the play, in being less closely tied to pre-existing myth, can be self-conscious about how myth grows and works. In contrast, the pre-history of the Oedipus story remains extremely primitive and has been systematically ignored in both classical tragedy and later

tradition. Most commentators, including Freud, leave out the question of why Oedipus and Laius and Jocasta were cursed, and Laius's responsibility for bringing the curse down on them.

Laius's father, Labdakos, died during his son's infancy. The throne was usurped, and later usurped again and Laius was driven into exile. He was given hospitality by King Pelops of Sparta, where he fell in love with the King's beautiful young son Chrysippos. He kidnapped the boy, raped him and caused his death. (It is argued that the outrageousness of this act lay, not in the act of homosexuality, but in the violation of hospitality.) King Pelops then cursed Laius, saying that if he should have a son, the son would kill him, Laius made up his mind never to have children, but one night he got drunk, and slept with his wife Jocasta, who conceived. Later Hera sent the Sphinx to ravage Thebes in retribution for Laius's crime and also, no doubt, to set the scene for Oedipus's victorious arrival in the city.

According to this pre-history of the myth, Laius's aggressive and violent homosexual act is the latent cause of the curse and Oedipus's later suffering. Chrysippos's experience with Laius can act as a displacement onto another young boy from a primal anxiety in son-to-father relations; the repression of this aspect of the myth then becomes a repression of the father's fault in the oedipal scenario. Marie Balmary explains Freud's oversight in terms of this need to repress the Laius-like qualities of his own father Jacob Freud. She argues that the logical consequence of this (personal) repression was the (theoretical) repression of the father's fault and Freud's decision to "exonerate" the father of seduction and "incriminate" the chid's fantasy of seduction.[28] It is known that Freud adopted the fantasy theory of seduction during the period of mourning over his own father's death.

> *This scotomisation of the complementary Oedipus complex is probably rooted in the adult's deep-seated need to place all responsibility for the Oedipus Complex on the child, and to ignore wherever possible those parental attitudes which stimulate the infant's Oedipal tendencies. That this deliberate scotoma is rooted in the characteristic authoritarian atmosphere of the nineteenth-century family is suggested by Freud's own thoughts on the etiology of hysteria.* [29]

Without attempting to solve this problem of primary fault or guilt, the narrative and narrational structures that are basic to the Oedipus myth can recast it so as to avoid a direct choice between fact and fiction or between reality and fantasy. Laius's crime is literally pre-Oedipal; it pre-exists the life story of his child whose tragic history transmutes the horror generated by the primal father into the father represented by the Symbolic Order in the person of Theseus.

The Oedipus myth, in its transition from the primal father to the father of the Symbolic Order, also shifts the question of fault or guilt out of the mythic terrain of phylogenesis and

places it within the psyche, within fantasy and thus also within culture and the possibility of resolution within culture.

The assumption of guilt on the part of the child is essential to the shift in formal and narrational structure in the Oedipus story. Whereas Laius, the guilty father, exists in a sphere of pure action, outside self-consciousness, the Oedipal trajectory gives Oedipus the metaphysical power to reconstitute his own history through the process of narration. This ability to *tell* and transcend is the crucial constitutive as aspect of the myth, and is more important a human attribute than guilt or innocence. It is here that the process of narration in psychoanalysis and the collective compulsion to repeat that generates narrative in culture come together in the Oedipus story.

The story of Oedipus's life moves through stages (from victim to royal child, from wanderer to hero-king, from defilement to catharsis, from sanctification to symbolic authority) that span the chasm separating Laius from Theseus. But Laius represents something that returns like a ghostly apparition when his son curses his own sons. In a criss-cross of time and space, from the lower depths of the mind and out of the mists of the past, the primal father erupts like Dennis Hopper's Frank in *Blue Velvet*. Frank is both the sadistic father of the primal scene, and a fearfully erotic father whose homosexual aggression threatens the hero/child with sexual passivity and death. Frank's world comes into its own at night, with the drugs, alcohol, bars and brothels that make up the criminal underbelly concealed by small town America's homely, law-abiding exterior. Jeffrey's descent into the lower depths is like the hero's journey in the folk-tale or film-noir, that makes a rite of passage; he emerges on the other side as a mature man who has won the right to marry the daughter of the representative of the law. But Frank leaves a legacy to the responsible, respectable, middle-class, middle-American husband (and father-to-be). The lower depths of the psyche are condensed onto the connotative imagery of the lower depths of the town, inhabited by personifications displaced from childhood experience of fantasy and fear. The end of the movie them implies that Frank will live on, repressed, within Jeffrey's psyche, waiting for the moment to return.

Freud perceived the Oedipal trajectory as similar for boys and for girls, owing to his important emphasis on the experience of difference as psychic rather than biological. Be this as it may, the principal players on the Oedipal stage are male, as Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out in her discussion of Oedipal narrative. Patriarchy is founded on rites and rights of inheritance and an exchange of women that neutralise neurotic, violent father/son rivalry within the language of symbolic order. In the process Laius, the incarnation of the primal, pre-Oedipal father, is forgotten or repressed and the power of the pre-Oedipal is mapped across the body of a powerful mother. We are accustomed to associating the pre-Oedipal with

the mother, who can thus initiate the processes of desire but also of horror (or, as Julia Kristeva puts it, *abjection).* The *primal father* confuses a neat polarisation between the pre- and post-Oedipal, opening up a space which speaks the origins of homophobic anxiety, which, in turn, conceals the timely "unspeakable" presence of Laius. Perhaps Laius's ghost can only be laid to rest if the power of repressed homosexuality in the father/son relationship is brought into daylight. But Frank leaves a legacy to the newly mature initiate into the patriarchal order. The end of the movie suggests that he will live on, a point of repression and attraction and fear, within Jeffrey's psyche, waiting for the moment of return. The lower depths of the psyche are condensed with the imagery of the lower depths of the town, inhabited by personifications that are displaced from childhood traumas, the primal phantasies of the Oedipus Complex, the castration complex and the primal scene.

Patriarchy is founded on rites and rights of inheritance and exchange of women that neutralise a neurotic, violent father/son rivalry and establish the basis for a symbolic order. But perhaps this symbolic depends shakily on the repression of the primal, pre-Oedipal father so that culture continues to be tinged with violence and institutions that claim to be guardians of the law and defence against chaos are maintained by the violence that lies behind patriarchal authority. The image of the primal *father* confuses the neat polarisation between mother and father. Julia Kristeva has discussed the phenomenon of horror and disgust as a culture returning under the aegis of a pre-Oedipal mother, a body without boundary, an "unspeakable" . Perhaps, even more "unspeakable" , hardly even achieving symbolisation in the collective fantasy of popular culture, is the threat embodied by the primal father. Perhaps, even his lack of cultural recognition is significant, returning rather in symptomatic social and sexual anxieties that afflict our society. Perhaps, desire for and fear of a powerful mother and the misogyny it generates conceals something even more disturbing, desire for and fear of a violent father. Perhaps, it is the "unspeakable" ghost of Laius that haunts relations between men, generating homophobic anxieties and an attraction bonded by physical violence represented by Frank's relationship to Jeffrey.

Looking at the Oedipal Myth in detail it is remarkable to what extent it is about father/son relations and how marginal the feminine is to the story. Even though the incest theme can suggest a residual memory of ritual and inheritance that pre-date the fully fledged patriarchal order, desire for the mother is more significant as a symptom of father/son rivalry. However, the story's narrative structure and the importance of investigation and telling in the story itself offers a Utopian promise, a pointer towards the transformative power of telling one's own story and the social function of popular culture as the narrativisation of collective fantasy. Recently, feminism through critical and analytical work has been attempting to inflect the way in which our society narrativises itself. In the process, feminist con-

sciousness can affect the discourse of patriarchy and upset the polarisation between masculinity and femininity that keeps its order in place. Shoshana Felman quotes Lacan:

> *To bring the subject to* recognise *and* name *his desire, this is the nature of the efficacious action of analysis. But it is not a question of recognising something that would have been there already-a given-ready to be captured. In naming it the subject creates, gives rise to something new, makes something new present in the world.*[30]

Certainty is the other side of the coin to anxiety. Curiosity and the riddling spirit of the Sphinx activate questions that open up the closures of repression and maintain the force of an "uncertainty principle" . As Teresa de Lauretis points out at the end of her chapter on Oedipus in *Alice Doesn't*, the story is still in the making. The Sphinx and her riddle are still waiting for a "beyond" .

NOTES

1. This paper has grown out of work initiated and discussed in a graduate seminar in the Department of Cinema Studies, New York University, during the fall semester 1986. I enjoyed and benefited from the seminar enormously. I would like to thank the following students who worked with me: Vicky Abrash, Parag Amladi, Catherine Benamou, Sarah Berry, Leo Charney, Manohla Dargis, John Johnson, Alexandra Juhasz, Barbara Kassen-Taranto, Irma Klein, Fay Plant, Doug Riblet, Vince Rocchio, Annabelle Sheehan, Shelley Stamp, Chuck Stephens, Michael Taslitz, Andreas Timmer, Christie Timms, Doug Troyan, Debbie Wulinger.

2. S.Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," *Standard Edition*, vol.IV. London: Hogarth Press. 261-2.

3. S.Freud, "On Creative Writing and the Ego," *Standard Edition*, vol.IX. London: Hogarth Press. 148.

4. "The Interpretation of Dreams," 217n.

5. Carl Schorske in his book (*Fin de Siecle Vienna*. Knop and New York, 1980) discusses the intricate web of condensation and displacement at work in Freud's dreams about his father, and the political significance they

contain: particularly, Freud's reaction to his father's lack of revolutionary spirit in the face of anti-semitism. "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 scene with one that fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made this boy swear before the household alter to take vengeance on the Romans" ('The Interpretation of Dreams,' 197). This point brings out the possibility of identification in rebellion between father and son in the face of social, economic and political oppression.

6. Vladimir Propp, "Oedipus in the Light of Folk-Tale" *Oedipus: a Folk Lore Case-Book* ed. Lowell Edmunds and Alan Dundas. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1984.

7. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. 116.

8. Sophocles, "Oedipus the King," *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles. London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1982. 182.

9. Ibid., 167.

10. Ibid., 183.

11. Tzvetan Todorov, "Detective Fiction," *The Poetics of Prose*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

12. Muriel Gardiner, ed., *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, 1972. 146.

13. Paul Arthur, "Shadows on the Mirror: Film Noir and Cold War America 1945-57," Ph.D. diss.

14. *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*, 149-50.

15. S.Freud, "Two Case Histories," *Standard Edition*, vol. x, 176-7.

16. Jacques Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," *Ecrits. A Selection.* London: Tavistock Press, 1977. 50.

17. *Ibid.*, 52.

18. Sophocles, "Oedipus at Colonus," *The Three Theban Plays*, 295-7, 314-17.

19. *Ibid.*, 300.

20. Anika Lemaire, *Jaques Lacan.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. 91-2.

21. Shoshana Felman, "Beyond Oedipus. The specimen story of Psychanalysis," *MLN Comparative Literature*, vol.98, no.5. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983. 1029-30.

22. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot.* New York: Vintage, 1985. 99-100.

23. *Ibid.*, 103.

24. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth".

25. Terence Turner, "Oedipus: Time & Structure in Narrative Form," *Forms of Symbolic Action.* American Ethnological Society, 1969. 32.

26. Shoshana Felman,"Beyond Oedipus," 1045.

27. Francois Ronstang, *Drive Mastery.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982. 21.

28. "Oedipus at Colonus," *The Three Theban Plays*, 365.

29. Marie Balmary, *Psycho-analysing Psycho-analysis.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

30. Georges Devereux, "Why Oedipus killed Laius," *Oedipus, a Folk Lore Case-Book*, 216.