

Opening Pandora's Box: From Ancient Sacrifice to Family Secrets

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The Philoctetes Center

Levy: Francis Levy
Nersessian: Edward Nersessian
Blum: Harold Blum
Branham: Joan Branham
Braverman: Lois Braverman
Harrison: Kathryn Harrison
Pedrick: Victoria Pedrick
A: Speaker from audience

Levy: I'm Francis Levy. I'm co-director of the Philoctetes Center. Ed Nersessian is the other co-director. And welcome to *Opening Pandora's Box*. The art you see on the walls here is from a show called *Self-Reflection: The True Mirror* that was curated by Hallie Cohen, who is the Chairman of the Art Department at Marymount Manhattan College. The title of this show refers actually to a true mirror which exists in the annex outside. This is an object where if you look into it you see yourself the way others see you.

I've said this before, but I just have to say it again: I looked into it and I just wasn't happy with what I saw. I promise I won't say that again.

I'm now pleased to introduce Harold Blum. Harold Blum is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and a training analyst at the New York University School of Medicine. Currently, he serves as Executive Director of the Sigmund Freud Archives and is a distinguished fellow at the American Psychiatric Association. He is past President of the Psychoanalytic Research and Development fund, past Vice President of the International Psychoanalytical Association, and former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. He is the author of several books and more than 150 psychoanalytic papers, so watch out. Anyway, Harold, I give it to you. Harold will moderate today's panel and will introduce our other distinguished guests. Thank you very much.

Blum: Thank you. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to "Opening Pandora's Box." I want to assure you: you don't have to be afraid. I trust you're all unionized, and you can expect to be stimulated, informed and enriched by the discussion.

We have a very, very interesting myth to explore, and in introducing this afternoon's discourse I want to tell you that not all of the Greek myths have immediate applications in today's world. If you talk to people about the myth of Zeus or Electra, or even of Oedipus, they aren't necessarily ready to associate it to social and historical events. Pandora's myth has remained alive over the many, many centuries. It has psychological, historical, religious, social and cultural meanings and applications, I'm sure all of which will come up in today's discourse. We have a very distinguished panel here of elite distinguished colleagues and discussants for today's discourse, and I'll let them all introduce themselves.

Harrison: I'm Kathryn Harrison. I am a writer. I write both fiction and nonfiction. In terms of this roundtable my book *The Kiss* is probably the most significant one in that it was one that gave away a large secret, which was my incestuous involvement with my father in my early twenties. I still blush when I say that.

Nersessian: You didn't blush.

Harrison: No? I feel hot. I teach writing as well. I teach at Hunter. And what else? I have a book coming out this June, a different kind of a book for me, called *While They Slept: An Inquiry into the Murder of a Family*, based on interviews with two siblings, one of whom murdered their parents and is in jail, and the other who was sixteen at the time—he was eighteen—and she has gone on to sort of put her life back together. And that's it.

Pedrick: Hi, thank you. I'm Victoria Pedrick, Vicky. I am a Classicist and Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University. Currently I am serving as an Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Georgetown's branch campus in Qatar, in Doha, where there are five American universities collaborating in a university educational experience for the citizens of Qatar. I have just finished a book on Euripides and Freud, which came out last year, and in it I investigate a play by Euripides, the *Ion*, which you may or may not be familiar with, but in it there is a very dark secret which the heroine of the play, Creusa, has about her past and about the results of it. I suspect that I may have an opportunity to tell you more about that as we go on.

Branham: My name is Joan Branham, and I'm an Associate Professor of Art History at Providence College. I also this year am Acting Director of Women's Studies and Religion at the Harvard Divinity School. I've been sort of scratching my head about why I'm in this group, but I'm very grateful and privileged to be here. And I think one of the reasons is that I work on theories of sacred space and gendered space, and so the politics of gender I think figures in, and so I hope to say a little more about that.

Blum: Very good. Lois?

Braverman: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Lois Braverman. I'm President of Ackerman Institute for the Family. I'm a family therapist, and I have a number of publications. My book *Women, Feminism and Family Therapy* is a text that's used in family therapy training. I suspect that I'm part of this because there's no way, as you know, to do couple and family therapy and not address the issues of family secrets.

Blum: Thank you very much. To just say a few opening words—when I first became interested in the Pandora myth it was with a realization that the classical interpretation of the myth was in symbolic terms: Pandora's box. A box in psychoanalytic symbolism represents the female genitals, or the female reproductive tract. That was the classical, and in many respects, the correct interpretation. But it now seemed to me quite incomplete because it didn't do justice to the many other meanings of the myth, which are very important. From within psychoanalysis one can see that also this sealed box represents the unconscious, and lifting the lid is lifting repression and allowing the repressed contents—regarded as dangerous, which is the reason they're repressed—to emerge into conscious awareness. So the myth actually becomes a representation of the analytic process. And the danger that the more general public has always

felt about psychoanalysis—beware of curiosity, don't look into the box, let sleeping dogs lie—and their fear of what is repressed emerging into awareness.

The other meaning, of course, that we're all here to discuss today has to do with secrets, with the cat being let out of the bag, with the secret coming out from under wraps, often after long periods of time, and often experienced as emerging with great danger to the person or to the family or to society at large. So that one can expand the myth of Pandora's Box to look at it in a variety of ways, beginning with the traditional symbolic interpretation, in terms of the female genitals; then in terms of the psychoanalytic process itself, the wider meaning of the public's reaction to psychoanalysis and to Freud, because whoever threatens to lift repression brings down the wrath also of society; and finally also to the whole issue of secrets and beyond, because the myth has other meanings as well. It's probably one of the reasons that the myth has remained so much alive over the centuries.

Pandora, as you know, was the gift of the gods. But it was a very poisoned gift—beware of the Greeks bearing gifts—because the gods have prepared this gift, and they all contributed to it. One of the myths, or variations of the myth, particularly has elaborated over the centuries. When the gods created Pandora they also created her box, which went with her, and this was supposed to be a great gift, but when Pandora opened the box and all the evils came out, with the exception of hope, which remained behind, then the world was exposed and humanity exposed to all manner of disaster, distress, evil, illness, epidemics, wars and so forth. So you can see there's one other element that will emerge from this, too, which is a more general view of the femme fatale. That is that the woman is the one who releases this evil, and women are responsible for all the evils that beset us. So I think with that as an introduction to get us started—and we have a female group here—who would like to open?

A: The box.

Blum: The box. Kathryn?

Harrison: As you were speaking I thought about my own history, and also my publication history. *The Kiss* was published in 1997, and created a huge amount of controversy, and called a huge amount of anger down on me. I was totally unprepared for it. But I quickly discovered that the taboo against incest is really much more of speaking about incest. I think that over the past decades we've learned that it's more common than we once believed. I know that when I was in my early twenties I thought I was probably the only person that had ever—there just wasn't anecdotal material. There weren't very many books out there on it. Now it's very different, but at the time people were—in a review in *The Wall Street Journal*, the last line was, “Shut up.”

Blum: What's that?

Harrison: “Shut up” was the last line of a review in *The Wall Street Journal*. And you know, it's a fairly reputable paper.

Blum: Put the lid back on.

Harrison: Yes. That was really the message of so many of the reviews: this is not something that's to be talked about. This is not something to write about, or this is not part of public discourse.

Pedrick: What made you decide to write about it?

Harrison: There were many reasons. I'd lived with a fairly large secret for a long time and there is stress involved with that. One thing I didn't understand, and that I understood increasingly as I got older, was that I had complied with the societal directive to keep it a secret. That in not saying anything I was obeying, you could call it a sort of patriarchal directive, but to remain silent about what had happened. In fact my first novel was quite autobiographical, written years before *The Kiss*. I had taken my own life story and fictionalized it, and once that was published I was really uncomfortable, because I found that I had done a thing that people often do, which is say, I made it up. Here's the story, but wait a minute, it's fiction. I lied. And that I found really increasingly uncomfortable.

Pedrick: The play I mentioned earlier, the *Ion*, there's a woman in it who strikes me—her circumstances are so similar to yours. This is a young girl who was raped by the god Apollo and impregnated, and she's the princess of Athens. Her father is the king. And this of course is a deep dark secret that will ruin her own life and ruin the royal line of Athens if it comes out. So when the baby is born she abandons it, and all of this happens before the play opens. The play opens when she is now married to an interloper, who has come from Thrace as a warlord to protect Athens from its enemies, and she married him and he got the throne. Now the couple has come to Delphi in quest of an answer to why they have no children. Of course part of the irony of the play is she has a child because the abandoned child was of course found—well, rescued, in fact, by her niece at Apollo's request, and raised as a temple slave.

It's a fascinating play at many levels, but there's a moment in the play when Creusa—the princess's name—when she realizes that everything she has thought she was getting by investing in a secret has failed to bring out a yield. She has no children, her husband she has discovered is about to have a son by a slave woman. Apollo has failed to give her any support. Every bargain she thought she was making with society has failed her, and so in the heart of the play she bursts into this lyric song of denunciation of the god. It's in the form of a Greek hymn, but it's a parody because it's a denunciation of the god. It's shot through with all of this erotic imagery about how he was wreathed in gold and he took her hand and led her into a bower, so it's this odd mixture of violence and anger and erotic tension.

At the end of it the chorus says, "What a treasure chest of horrors is being opened up." And it's exactly right, because there was a treasure chest that she—when she abandoned her baby she put the baby in a box, and she put into the box some golden tokens that would prove his identity and a little piece of weaving that she had done as a child that would prove her identity. She put them all in the box and she closed it up, and then she put the box in a place where she thought the child would die, and yet she wanted the god to rescue the child and he didn't, as far as she knows. So now the chorus perfectly captures what she's done. She's treasured up the secret in the expectation that she would get these remarkable yields: status, a husband, children. And she's got nothing. So the chorus says, "What a treasure chest of horrors."

It's an amazing moment in the play—which, by the way, has a happy ending. It's actually an amazing play precisely because everything turns out all right. Mother and abandoned son are reunited. But it has these incredibly dark moments that your story reminds me of, and that image of the treasure chest of things that you put into a box in the hopes that you'll get a return on your investment—as the Latin term 'to invest' is to cover them in, and cover it over. But you don't.

Harrison: And also just the fear of speaking the truth, because you feel that that will cause you to lose everything. You'll lose your friends. Your family will turn on you because of the nature of the secret. You'll become sort of a pariah. That's very powerful.

Pedrick: Yes. But ironically, because she did it, she ends up with everything. She thought she had nothing, but she ends up with everything, because she does get her son back. He will go on to become the king of Athens, united with his mother. It's an odd turn that the play takes with what it is to invest in that kind of pain for the woman. She has to put up with this suffering for years and years and years, but finally the god will bring it right.

Branham: I actually appreciate both of these, because both of those stories, a mythological one and a personal one, seem to point to a couple of things: the public nature of secrets and its impact, and the personal, familial level. We read an essay by Harold here on the Freudian playing out of this notion of secrets, so for example in the Pandora story these secrets are deadly and dangerous and must be kept with the lid on, as we were saying earlier. But for the Freudian context it's the opposite. That's what's causing the problems, and the release of these then is the therapeutic healing. As I was reading some of this, because I'm not a psychoanalyst, I was thinking of Freud as the modern Pandora. Pandora is the one who reveals. She is the one who has this insatiable quest to know, just like Eve, and there have been so many parallels between Pandora and Eve. The one thing that both of them want is to know. They seek knowledge, and that is what drives both of them. Of course it seems to be driving Freud too, so I just thought of that whole sort of, you know, Freud as Pandora.

Blum: Absolutely correct. The whole idea of forbidden fruit, the apple. It's forbidden to be curious, to eat of the tree of knowledge. You may be interested to know that Freud played with the name Dora—at one point young Freud played with the name Theodora and Pandora and Dora, and Teodora, from the Opera. It was interesting that shortly after he was taking off in his own reverie about the name, that the next patient came along and he named her Dora. And sure enough, the Dora case has a great deal to do with family secrets. The most obvious, important secret there is that Dora's father is having an affair with a friend's wife, and trying to pawn her off on the friend so that his daughter can have an affair with the friend while he carries on an affair with the friend's wife. There were other family secrets too, but the case history is organized really to a degree around family secrets, which are then opened up.

Braverman: I was very interested, Kathryn, in your comment about what secrets in a sense are given room in the public discourse, and what secrets are forbidden to enter the public discourse when we really want them to disappear. I think that incest is one of the secrets that in some sense has no place, no real safe place. There isn't a safe place in the public discourse at all for it to be revealed. It is probably one of the most difficult secrets to work with in the context of the family. Even though we know that there are real things, real reactions that families can have that make a difference for the child that's been in a position where incest has occurred—there are real things

that can help, that can make it better, that can build resilience—it's probably one of the most difficult secrets to treat.

Harrison: Yes, absolutely. I myself have been in that office as a young woman, twenty-three—it took me a long time to say why I was there. And I did expect the ceiling to crack open and a lightning bolt to vanish me from the chair.

Braverman: To dissolve.

Harrison: I mean, actually with my psychiatrist I kept saying, "Aren't you shocked?" You know, "Don't you think I'm a bad person?" He says, "No, not really," and I was like pushing him to give me the response that I expected because there was something so unnerving to actually say the words and then have someone say, "Oh. That's interesting. Let's talk about that." The taboo is incredibly strong because it needs to be. It has to be as strong as the urge that it's trying to keep at bay, and that's good. We need that taboo. But it was interesting to me, I guess, having lived with it for so long I really expected people to say, "Kathryn Harrison is a bad person." Plenty of people did say that, but I didn't expect people to say, "Don't talk about it." It wasn't cocktail party conversation, clearly. It's not something I brought up in any sort of casual situation, but I did feel that that was the purpose of books: to talk about what you couldn't talk about in other contexts.

Pedrick: I wanted to ask Harold about that, if you could interpret what her psychiatrist did. When someone brings out a secret—Creusa hears what a treasure chest of horrors—but the psychoanalyst denies that reaction. As I heard it, Kathryn's psychiatrist didn't really react to the news that you had been a part of an incest situation. And does that ring true for you as an analyst that you're not going to overreact.

Harrison: Well, I wanted him to judge me.

Pedrick: Right, right.

Harrison: And he wouldn't. Which is good, in retrospect. He shouldn't have. But I was looking for some sort of confirmation of the world as I understood it, that this was a terrible thing and an abomination and I was unclean. I was looking for sort of a reality check, and he just didn't give it to me.

Pedrick: But he could have also been very sympathetic.

Harrison: He was neither.

Pedrick: He was neither. And that's what I wondered.

Blum: Well, one of the reasons that we espouse a degree of neutrality and objectivity in hearing about this is, as you know, there are also false accusations of incest, or of anything else. Initially, when one hears a very disturbing, traumatic history one suspends judgment and tries to understand where the patient is coming from and whether or not there is a good deal of fact, or whether the patient is dealing with something which for various reasons is largely fantasy. A long time ago, back in 1914, Freud said most of these stories are compounded of fact and

fantasy. They're compromised formations. And one has to determine, over a period of time, with a good deal of analytic work very often, what is factual in the history and what has been distorted and elaborated in the form of fantasy. If you all recall, initially in the seduction theory at the earliest part of psychoanalysis, Freud believed without reservation many of the stories patients were telling him about having been seduced by a parent. Some of the analysts went overboard, and then looked upon such revelations by patients as only fantastic.

I do want everyone to know that Freud never abandoned the notion and the concept of psychic trauma, and to the end of his days he always recognized that people have been traumatized. And one of the most serious traumatic experiences a person can have is incest. It's tragic and traumatic. Psychoanalysts were accused at one point of overlooking the reality of child abuse, which was never true. The pendulum did shift to a degree in terms of those analysts who tended to put more emphasis on fantasy and overlook certain realities in degree. But the idea that Freudian analysts paid no attention to reality and were living in a fantasy world and knew nothing about traumatic experience, whether it was child abuse or the Holocaust, is really nonsense.

Now I want to say something about Creusa and Oedipus, because as you were talking, Victoria, it made me think of the similarities, that Oedipus too has a history of being abandoned. The identity of Oedipus is unknown. It's a discussion in the play really of a child who's trying to find his identity. There are several secrets. One is that he was adopted. He was not told he was adopted. When he hears rumors that he's been adopted he leaves his adopted home and goes elsewhere, and ends up to his great sorrow, and to a family disaster, of killing his father en route and ending up, unknowingly as it were, unwittingly marrying his mother in another city.

Now the Greeks as far as I understand it, and I think you may know better than I do about the attitude of the Greeks in the Greek culture at that time, but I believe that part of their feeling that Oedipus deserved to be punished was not only incest. It was that he should have known more about his family roots. And their rage at Jocasta, his mother, who kills herself, is that a mother should know her own son. Now Creusa and her son apparently first find each other in this way, but the stories are very similar. Oedipus is abandoned. His father has committed homosexual rape. He's cursed and told that his son will kill him; there's a prophecy. So he abandons the son, whose ankles are then pierced, and he's found by a shepherd. Very similar to the social history we're hearing, as Oedipus is given more and more details that would implicate him as the murderer of his father and involved in incest with his own mother, he refuses to hear it, and turns away every clue. As the evidence mounts it becomes incontrovertible. And then at that point Oedipus blinds himself and Jocasta kills herself.

But one can say, similar to your story, Kathryn, that you could look at the play in terms of truth and consequences. As the truth emerges in the Oedipus story of Sophocles, the consequences are indeed quite terrible. As knowledge is gained, it's offset in a way that also tells us something about the attitudes of society towards these revelations of what's in the unconscious, because as Oedipus begins to understand and to see, and he sees more and more what's going on and what he has done, he ends up blind.

Harrison: Right.

Blum: Which is the way society has ended up with respect to repression.

Nersessian: I wanted to just make a comment about your question from a slightly different angle than Harold. If you take the position of sympathy on one side, or criticism on the other, you are essentially closing the door for finding out what happened. In addition to the fact that when you start looking for what happened there are secrets that lie behind that secret, and even more behind that. A psychoanalyst's role is one of getting as much of that into the open rather than too quickly taking a side and closing things off.

Blum: Yes. Well said.

Pedrick: Your reference to Oedipus is absolutely right. There are a lot of parallels between Oedipus and Ion, and I think in fact that Euripides probably planned some of those parallels to be very sharply drawn, because in the course of the play Creusa comes this close to killing her son, not knowing who he is. Ion comes equally close nearly to killing his mother, not knowing who she is. So the recognition takes place after both of them have attempted murder on the other, and it is about a failure of knowledge, of family knowledge, that's created when you abandon a child. In Greek mythology it's clear that when the gods send a prophecy to a king like Laius that you're going to have a son who's going to kill you, basically they're telling him, you're done. Your reign is over, you're finished. Because in the normal course of events sons grow up and supplant their fathers—hopefully not brutally, not violently. But they move them out of the way so that they can then sit on the throne.

But to have that natural process written as an act of violence by the gods suggests that your reign is over, your time on earth is done. Then of course what Laius does to avoid it simply makes it happen because he abandons his son, and when you cut loose a child from its family ties then that child can become anything. And he does. He becomes, as you said, the adopted son of the king and queen of Corinth. He becomes a murderer. He becomes a usurper. He becomes a partner in incest with his mother. Abandonment makes it possible for a child to become anything, and the *Ion* of Euripides plays with the same notion, because Ion could be a dead baby in a box, he could be a temple slave, or he may turn out to be the founder of the Ionian race and the founder of the dynasty in Athens. But it's abandonment that makes all of Oedipus's identities pile up on one another so that he becomes this horrific sight of pollution and condemnation, whereas abandonment for Ion—happy ending, again—makes it possible for him to move successively and successfully through all the roles that he has to move to become what he's meant to be. So what I find interesting about both myths is the role of abandonment and how they are terrible strategies for dealing with secrets, for maintaining who you are socially.

Harrison: Right. My own story began with an abandonment that occurred twenty years earlier. I was raised by my mother's parents. My mother got pregnant when she was seventeen, and she was locked in a fight to the death with her own mother, and had picked out the most exact wrong boy. They decided not to have an abortion. My parents were married very briefly, and my mother's parents "disappeared" my father—they forced her into a divorce. She couldn't stand up to them. They told my father they didn't want him around, they didn't want child support, he just needed to disappear. And my father disappeared. So I grew up in a house in which my father's name was never mentioned. I had a great deal of curiosity about him, and I saw him maybe twice as I was growing up, for very brief periods. But he existed out of reach, unknown, and I had a

terrible relationship with my mother, who was a pretty damaged person, and had also abandoned me. Actually, she left me with her parents.

When I was twenty, my father reappeared. He did actually have a rather hard time seducing me, but at that point I was somebody who would have accepted love in any form it was offered, and also somebody who was furiously angry at my mother, as was my father. Effectively my sexual relationship with my father was a way of destroying my mother, and I think that was something that I didn't acknowledge at the time. I couldn't acknowledge it at the time, but I was murderously destructive in my anger toward my mother. She knew it was happening, and yet I never admitted it. I knew that lying about it was also a great torment to her. I suppose I understood, I had some sense of the gratification coming from that. Of course I was also totally miserable, but it all began with abandonment, and how that played out in terms of both my parents.

Nersessian: But yours is all sorts of abandonment.

Harrison: Of course, yes.

Nersessian: But if I understand it, your father didn't have much of a presence in your life.

Harrison: None, almost.

Nersessian: Whereas the cases at least that I've had something to do with where the father is active—there's an ongoing family.

Harrison: Right, right. No, it is different, and I wasn't a child. I was twenty.

Braverman: But just taking this idea in your story, and also in the stories that you're sharing with us, it seems to me that in each secret not only is the theme of abandonment there, but the theme of betrayal, that secrets are a kind of betrayal. In all of these stories the family secret that's getting carried, what you don't know—you don't know your father, you don't know who your birth parents are, you don't know where you come from or who you belong to—that is experienced as a betrayal. We're in the arena of abandonment, incest, those secrets, but even if we move to another shameful secret, like when there's domestic violence in a family, this is also a secret that has great difficulty being brought into the public discourse.

Harrison: And which is what ended up causing the murder in the book that I've just finished. This is a kid who was badly abused by his parents and tried to tell people, social services, all sorts of—and it just was something that people didn't want to hear. His parents didn't want it known. This was a family that closed itself off, and one day he snapped.

Blum: Joan?

Branham: Well, I just keep hearing so many rich things coming out, and I guess if I could just pick up on a couple of threads that maybe intersect from an angle. Kathryn mentioned seduction. You actually even used the word pollution, what's polluting the city where Oedipus is, and these were words that also seemed to be coming out in the essay about Pandora. One of the things that's interesting is Pandora's been given this incredible gift of beauty. She's gorgeous, and she

of course is irresistible in some ways. I know that at one point you likened her to the sirens, of being very, very attractive and that men can't resist her. What's interesting, again, I guess is this parallel, this Eve/Pandora parallel, where they actually are the two who are seduced by this desire to know, or knowledge. And in both of those primal myths of the first woman—Pandora, Eve—it is in fact their quest to know that marks their humanity. That's what makes them so human. It's just a sort of interesting thing.

On the other hand, the notion of pollution. Of course Pandora is saddled with this history of having polluted the human world because of these evils that have escaped. I'm sure that this audience is very highly aware of all of the social constructs of woman as pollutant. But it manifests itself in so many interesting ways in ancient literature, and also the way spaces are constructed, whether it's the ancient temple in Jerusalem or ancient churches or early churches, and woman as pollutants, especially if they're associated with the blood of reproduction, or the blood of menstruation.

Pedrick: Oedipus considers himself polluted in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The gods have sent a curse on Thebes. They've caused a plague because no one has avenged the dead king. It's the murder of the father, or the murder of the king that starts the theme of pollution and taint within the city. As he goes on and finds out that he is the murderer and he has called down a curse upon himself as the murderer, he becomes more and more horrified. It's not clear that the city of Thebes itself holds him in the same disregard, and that's one of the weirder things about Sophocles' play is the degree to which so many of the Thebans don't want him to bring the secret out because they like him, they like that he's the king. He's rid them of the Sphinx, who was a tyrant before Oedipus came along, so they're delighted to have this king, and they don't really care that he may turn out to be the murderer of the previous king. But he persists in his own quest for the knowledge, and ultimately inflicts the penalty upon himself, the demand that he be sent into exile—to which Creon says, "No, we're not going to send you into exile. We're going to keep you here"—and his putting out his own eyes so that he won't have to look upon his mother or his children, both of whom he sees as tainted.

So the notion of pollution is very much self-inflicted in the case of Oedipus. In fact, when the *Iliad* makes a reference to Oedipus as it does, it says he's still on the throne, unhappy and grieving that he's murdered his father and slept with his mother, but on the throne. So somehow this goes back into the notion of what happens when you repress a secret, and when it comes out you inflict upon yourself the judgment and the sense of pollution. Oedipus's fate conforms to that in some ways.

Harrison: Absolutely.

Braverman: In some of the families that I've worked with the sense of judgment is felt beyond the individual, but the guilt in some cases of the mother for not protecting the daughter, or for being too distant, or for abandonment. Everyone in the family actually is impacted by the secret and by the betrayal, no matter what the secret is. In the play that you're talking about we have to imagine what it was also like for Oedipus's mother, that everybody has their own reverberations from the impact of both keeping the secret and the revelation of the secret.

Harrison: And just the notion of what is a secret. I mean if it's a secret then it's something that you don't want other people to know, and therefore one assumes that it is something wrong, something that will bring about judgment. Are there secrets that are too wonderful to tell, that will make you look really good? I don't think so, really.

Braverman: No, I think that shame is part of the nature of holding a secret, that there's fear or concern that if it gets revealed, what I did or what I know, what someone else in the family did, it will somehow bring a certain modicum of shame.

Harrison: Right. And then of course the power of secret, which has a lot to do with seduction. Eve and Pandora were both seduced by their curiosity to find out what was withheld. Sexual seductions are also about access to what is withheld. It's all very much connected.

Blum: Yes. There's a double betrayal: a betrayal in the formation of the secret and a betrayal in the revelation of the secret. One betrayal is the concealing; the other is in the revealing. It's as if there's always an experience of being double-crossed at the time. And in terms of truthful consequences, everyone who's keeping the secret is in some way afraid of the consequences, because those who have bound them to the secret are also afraid that they will be betrayed or want to be at the same time. And they may want to be condemned and want to be exonerated simultaneously, or alternately.

Harrison: Right, and then the question of what restitution is. How do you get back to the clean place? Is revelation enough? No, not really. Certainly for many years I was only too ready to condemn myself, to see myself as polluted and dirty. It was much more about me than what anybody told me to feel. And yet sometimes I am aware of myself as somebody who has crossed over a line that I cannot—I can't return from that place. I can't undo it. So telling the secret isn't enough to return one to some sort of—you can't get to before the fall.

Blum: No, and confession doesn't always bring absolution. The game of truth and consequences, if you want to look at it that way in terms of Sophocles, really has its parallels to what you're describing, because the secret is always associated in the mind of those who are maintaining the secret with what will the consequences be. What are the consequences of having formed the secret in the first place, having bound the person psychologically and socially to the secret, and then what are the consequences of the secret being at last revealed? And for the child who has to bear the secret the consequences are also developmental, because it really in many respects interferes with the child's normal line of development, in some way impinging on it.

Pedrick: If a child is abandoned as part of the formation of the secret that's particularly true, isn't it? Because you have a child who has to form who he is or she is in the absolute dearth of information, but the certainty that somebody thought some status or knowledge was more important than they were. Maintaining myself as a princess or maintaining my family as safe from a child that will kill it is much more important than me as a baby. That's got to be a terrible place, a betrayal to start from for a child who has otherwise no information because they've been abandoned.

Blum: Yes. Certainly in the case of all adopted children some feeling of betrayal in the first place, learning that they were abandoned. And sometimes it happens with adopted children, that

the adopted parents withhold the truth and do not tell the child that the child's been adopted. In the case of Oedipus that was the situation, so there was a series of lies to begin with, lies of omission and lies of commission, as Oedipus moves along in his life, in the trajectory from Corinth to Thebes. The group may be interested also to know about the quest for identity in these children. Many adopted children, especially today with the release of birth records, are very determined to find out about their family roots, to trace them and to look for their parents, who don't always want to be found. It's a complicated picture.

But the person who most of all introduced the theme of identity into psychoanalysis and into the public, Erik Erikson, was a person who concealed his identity, which was in turn concealed from him. Erikson concealed two major things about his own life: first, that he was an illegitimate child, and the identity of his father was withheld from him by his mother. Second, that his parents—meaning in this case his mother and his stepfather—lied to him and told him that his stepfather was his biological father. This continued later on when Erikson lied to his own children. I won't go into all of that too, but it's fascinating to think about how someone struggling so much with his own identity issues would introduce the theme of identity that became so important, and made a contribution to our understanding of identity problems, based upon his own history and his own very disturbed history in this regard.

The other thing along with that that he always concealed, a dark family secret tied up with his illegitimacy, was that he was Jewish. He took a Scandinavian name, called himself Erikson, son of Erik, and reinvented himself as a non-Jew.

Harrison: Son of himself.

Blum: Yes.

A: I just wanted to add that this continues, because he disappeared a son of his own. They had a mongoloid themselves.

Blum: Yes, they had a mongoloid child.

A: They put him away, and only the oldest son knew, and the other children didn't.

Blum: The other children didn't know because he asked the oldest son to lie to the other children.

Levy: I had a question in regard to the way you've set up this particular roundtable as predicated on a myth. We seem to have two kind of trajectories going on here: one is an aesthetic trajectory and one is a trajectory that sort of relates to the human personality in its realistic forms. I was wondering, because when you look at the myth—like you look at Lear, you look at Oedipus, you look at Hamlet—all of these contain thin variations on these plays of traumatic situations having to do with incest in one way or another. In those particular myths you have, again, like an Orpheus kind of situation, too, where you have destruction. There has to be utter and complete destruction in order to have a reconstitution of the human personality, in order for life, in *Hamlet*, for instance, to keep going on. So in terms of real time, what do you find in practices, in cases where people have undergone these highly traumatic situations? What is the comparison to that? I mean people's lives don't come to an end. They go on, but in the reconstitution of

personality is there a death of personality? What is the parallel to these kind of mythic constructions?

Blum: We have the most varied outcomes, as we all have come to understand. There are those like Kathryn, who have been able to write about this, to become a writer, an author, who has a creative outcome. We're very admiring of your creativity and your work. And it co-exists, I'm sure, with the pain you felt along the way. I noticed even one of the titles, *While They Slept*, has to also refer back to some of the issues in your own life which have been so painful. But the outcomes are tremendously variable.

We do find, as I think Joan was also discussing, that there is something so preciously human, our desire to know, to understand, even when we find that the truth in many ways has its own cost in terms of pain or distress. One of the reasons we're able to really be civilized and to develop culture is that we have this desire to evermore understand and expand our knowledge. And this co-exists with all these oppressive and repressive forces in culture going on at the same time. You know that there are so many countries in the world on a social level which have major censorship. There's no freedom of inquiry, no freedom of thought, no freedom of the press and so forth. It has a bearing on Adam and Eve and on the Creusa myth, on Oedipus and so forth, the constant struggle between wanting to evermore understand, to gather more and more knowledge, and the inhibition of curiosity and understanding. I think that's one of the great meanings of the Pandora myth. You keep the lid on and suppress or repress, or you allow it to come out and to enlarge our understanding, which in the long run is so civilizing in the social/cultural sense and so therapeutic for the individual. It allows individual growth instead of all the energy being focused on how can I keep the lid on this?

Nersessian: Yes, but there is another aspect to it. It's that the trauma—let's take the case of incest—can then become part of who you are, and as a result of that if you see yourself as this is who I am, the victim of incest, then your whole life is colored by that fact. It can be some place where you can go hide, to your detriment, and it can be used for more positive things. But the danger is when you go hide behind that to your own detriment, and it becomes a kind of cover for not exploring deeper issues. I think you have revealed a few of the deeper issues. It's not uncommon for a child, a girl child for example, who is adopted, to develop the fantasy that she would like one day to find the man who is her father and get revenge on him for abandoning her by sleeping with him and then revealing to him, you see what you did? So those fantasies—if you're going to understand what happens much better and at deeper levels, you have to go behind and find those out so that the incest doesn't become your identity, doesn't become who you are.

Harrison: Right. And I'd actually say that in my own case in some ways I was easier prey because I had such a desire to know my father, to know him completely. Later I think it also served me because I was curious about myself. I was at a good university—this is not the place that I expected to end up. I dropped out of school for a while, my life was in a shambles. And when I finally managed to separate from my father, which was only when my mother died, I had to step back and say, what happened, and why? I was curious. I mean I was always interested in—I've seen an analyst for many years. She's in her nineties now, or she's in her late eighties. And it's always about, but why did I do that?

Braverman: When you were talking about *Hamlet* and how in the plays all this sort of explodes when the secret gets revealed, I think that in seeing families when a secret gets revealed, whether it's an affair or incest or domestic violence, that there is initially an explosion where everybody feels like the world is going to come to an end. Something horrible has happened, and there's an experience of the family feeling shattered.

Harrison: The world has come to an end.

Braverman: The world as they knew it. At that point it is over. The reality as they constructed it, the story that they had about themselves and their relationships as a family is over about that. But one of the things that is just incredibly striking to me is how resilient families and individuals are, that people don't really in the long run fall apart. They reconstitute.

Harrison: Well, yes, I mean I think they come apart. I actually thought of myself as somebody who disassembled. I used to have dreams in which I was in a car accident and my face would fall apart like a jigsaw puzzle, and then I'd have to pick up the pieces, and there were never all of them left. I always had to make a new face, because some of them were missing. I do have a sense that the girl that I was before I met my father is dead and that there's a new me, and she lacks some of what that girl had, and she has other aspects that that girl didn't. But she's not the same person.

Braverman: Right. In a sense you created a new story.

Harrison: Yes.

Braverman: You became, in many ways, a better self.

Harrison: Yes.

Braverman: Or a stronger self, or a self—

Harrison: A more complicated self.

Braverman: A more complicated self, right. Also what I would say—and I think in terms of the work when we're seeing whole families rather than individuals where a secret is uncovered like this—is that whatever the act was, and whoever (and everybody really in a family is participating in the secret in one way or another)—every individual is more than the secret. It's very hard to know that, or to experience that at the time of disclosure, because at the time of disclosure in a sense the secret saturates every aspect of the self.

Harrison: And the secret has been holding all of those individuals back.

Braverman: Exactly.

Blum: The secret has been saturating the self.

Braverman: It saturates really the story that's not being told, the subtext of what's not being told in the family.

Blum: Yes. The notion of resilience is very important, but of course it varies tremendously among people. Some individuals are able to reconstitute after the most horrific experiences. We know people who've lost every member of their family in the Holocaust and have been able to reconstitute their lives in ways that are astounding and could never have been predicted. And there are others who are shattered, totally shattered, by the experience and unable to ever get themselves together.

Harrison: It is mysterious how people manage to survive and go on, but it's also mysterious how people are broken by things that seem relatively—

Pedrick: Minor.

Harrison: Minor.

Blum: But hope remains in the box. But we do keep in mind—we don't want to be naïve—that some children of incest will repeat it, will go on and perpetrate incest in the next generation. Others will act out in other ways that are destructive. I had a patient, I remember very clearly, who had incest with his sister. And he became a very harsh disciplinarian of his children. They were punished for his crime.

Harrison: Right.

Blum: He would beat them up rather savagely for the most minor infraction of the rules. It wasn't until he was in therapy and the analytic work began, that he could make the connections and begin to understand and work it out, that he became a much different kind of father. But up to that point, unknowing to himself, he was enacting part of this whole set of internal difficulties in the next generation with his own children. Not through incest, but through physical abuse.

Levy: One of the most peculiar things I find, with all of the sexual liberation and all the kind of freedom linguistically that we've had to some extent, there seems to be no end to the amount of shame that is proposed in any discussions about human sexuality. It continues, and no amount of revelations seems to counteract that, ironically. People write exposés, they are free in talking about what happens, but it still seems that area is the hardest to negotiate. It's a peculiarity of the human consciousness.

Pedrick: I was trying to think of how to bring this in—there's another perspective on the myth of Pandora that is actually the perspective of the guy from whom we first know about her, which is Hesiod. In the *Theogony* he doesn't even tell us about the jar or her opening a jar and letting out evils. Instead she's part of a series of secrets and betrayals that are acted out between two male gods. Zeus and Prometheus are in this struggle with one another, and Prometheus starts by sacrificing some animals, and he puts the meat underneath the hide and he puts the bones underneath the fat, the savory, and he says to Zeus, "Which do you want? Do you want the thing under the skin, or the thing under the fat?" Zeus chooses the portion under the fat and ends up with these inedible bones, and so he's furious at being tricked. So he steals fire back from humans, removes it so that they cannot have it, and Prometheus steals it back, and he hides the fire—this is the second secret—he hides the fire inside of fennel stock so that Zeus won't know he's taken fire back to humans. Then when Zeus realizes that humans have fire once again, that's

when Zeus makes Pandora—so that there's a series of tit for tats. If we look at those anthropologically what we see is a definition of the human condition. When we sacrifice to the gods we take the edible parts for ourselves and eat the meat—that's why we wound up with the meat under the skin—and we burn the inedible parts for the gods, because they don't need to be tainted with food. And when it comes to fire, we have to have fire, we have to be able to carry it around, because that's how we get technology.

Well, how does a woman fit into that? She's the deadliest secret of them all, because men can't live with her and they can't live without her. They can't reproduce and have children that will take care of them in their old age and pass on their names if they don't engage in sex. But on the other hand, if they do take the woman, if Epimetheus does take Pandora, the lovely exterior with the evil within, which is the way the gods constructed her, then they wind up with this burden: doesn't help when they're poor, just drains resources, will cheat on them if they get a chance. But this goes back to what Ed was saying about sexuality. Sexuality, the need for technology, and sacrifice are sort of the three ways in which humans get defined. The Greeks understood that secrets are a part of all those.

Branham: I think that's great. I would just add to that that we've been talking about relationships—psychoanalyst/patient, parent/child, one generation to another—and it seems to me that the Hesiod myth is about sorting out relationships. It's sorting out who are the gods, what belongs to the divine world, what belongs to the human world, because this is what this myth is about, sorting out relationships between gods and humans, between male and female, between animal and human and divine. And as well it's sorting out these two sort of institutions that get established: sacrifice and marriage. Marriage, because of Epimetheus's marriage to Pandora. So those are all contracts: sacrifice and marriage, institutionalized in its relationships, in these social frameworks.

Pedrick: And they all have secrets and deceit at the heart of them.

Branham: That's right.

Blum: Well, we have our relationship to our wise audience, and speaking of opening things up, I'd now like to open the discourse to the audience.

A: Two comments. A parallel to opening up Pandora's Box is if an in-depth therapist attacks defenses in a very vulnerable person instead of slowly working them through, and it can result in a borderline or psychotic picture coming forth. In the rare, rare instance where someone is brought into an on-the-couch traditional analysis who is potentially psychotic or borderline, a regressive situation can just open up too much.

But following Harold's point about how women are responsible for all evil, in relation to Jocasta, as I remember, and we have a Greek scholar here, Laius told Jocasta to kill Oedipus. Well, she didn't kill him, and that set the whole thing in motion. Instead she abandoned him with a stake, and one shepherd then brought him to the other shepherd and betrayed Laius. So in a sense she was responsible for Laius's death. And then, following Harold's comment that she could have recognized him, he was the age of her son. He must have resembled something of her husband and herself—and Harold's pointing to the sure foot. With this constellation there was a form of

denial, and of course the femme fatale, who was a widow and wanted a young, beautiful man and set the thing up, so it just proves the point.

A: I was wondering if you would comment a little bit on another role of secrets. In children, particularly young girls, secrets can also form sort of a bonding and a sharing in their friendship, their relationships with each other. I'd love to hear your comments on that role of secrets.

Braverman: I would say a few words about that, because I think that you're right that there's certain childhood secrets that can form bondings and connection and closeness, where you say to someone you want to designate as your best friend, "I'm going to tell you this," to find someone that will be the holder of your secrets. But we've also seen in the news where certain secrets that then get exposed can be very destructive for young girls in their friendships as well. So we can see how it can work both ways, where it can form a kind of intimacy to share your secret with someone, and then the question is, what kind of secret is it? You're raising an interesting question for me—are there secrets that you could share as a young girl with your girlfriend that don't lead to destruction?

Harrison: Right. I think that people create secrets to create a sort of intimacy that can't be broken by other people. But those would be secrets that the children themselves created together. Then there's the secrecy of having perhaps done something wrong together, either accidentally or on purpose—you know, little things, shoplifting, or bigger things. That's a different kind, that's being sort of shackled to somebody. It creates intimacy, but it might not be a good thing. It might not feel good.

Braverman: But a childhood secret might be sharing something about yourself. For example, where you say I have a crush on this boy. All right, so that might be a kind of secret that isn't involving a system larger than yourself.

Harrison: No, but you are also handing that person power over you. You're saying, I like you and I trust you enough to keep my secret.

Braverman: Right.

Harrison: So you're being vulnerable.

Branham: I just wanted to add into this a sort of personal and professional note. The notion of secrets actually generating special constructs—we're all familiar with the temple or the holy of holies: it's got a secret, it's a hidden chamber, and ancient Egyptian temples. But on your question, I have a ten-year-old daughter, so I can relate to this. We just redid the basement to be her little clubhouse. But she wanted to have one little portion of it with a drapery and everything for her chamber of secrets, with her friends. Again, how it manifests itself spatially—

Harrison: Behind the veil.

Branham: Right.

Harrison: A veil of secrecy.

Nersessian: Children having little secrets, playing secrets is one thing. But secrets that are based on a traumatic situation that's happened, let's say to siblings, can on the one hand tie them together, which is good because they are supportive of each other, but can later on have bad consequences because of their own development and things like that.

A: Earlier you touched on whether or not there can be good secrets and all, and I just wonder—I feel like there are good secrets, but maybe they don't necessarily stay good if you keep them a secret. Like not an Oedipal secret, like a conscious adult secret, hoarding a gift or something like that. Does that then become bones under the fat? What happens? What myths and case studies speak to that?

Braverman: So your example is hoarding a gift, like holding a gift or surprise party as a secret?

A: Or a talent.

Branham: That's wrapped up in identity, as a talent.

Braverman: A pseudonym for an author or painter.

Levy: Yes.

Braverman: That kind of talent? Is that what you mean?

A: I guess, or maybe—I can think of an example of like a fear that your talent would be manipulated by others, and it's not of your own desire, therefore keeping it a secret and sort of damning your success.

Nersessian: It gets more and more complex.

Harrison: It's not so benign anymore.

Nersessian: You may have to come and show us your talent.

Blum: Well, there's certainly a difference between secrets born out of trauma or tragic situations, as Ed was saying, secrets associated with a great deal of shame, guilt and anxiety, and secrets which are part of normal bonding. After all, the notion of a secret is related also to prophecy. Girls need prophecy, for example, about menstruating. It's a secret within the family. Most girls don't go around telling everybody in the family, hey, I'm having my period.

Branham: Well, they do to their girlfriends.

Blum: They do to their girlfriends, and then there's a bit of bonding. We bond together as girls, and we girls have periods and that's part of growing up feminine to have that experience. It's a normative experience. It's also different when a child feels the parents intrude and they have fantasies that the parents are omniscient and know what the child's thinking, as opposed to a more normal developmental experience where the children have a feeling of the privacy of their own thoughts, and secrets that they can keep from their parents, which are part of normal development.

Another example would be normal masturbation, that boys masturbate.

Harrison: And girls.

Blum: And girls. I'm talking from the point of view of a boy. We talked about girls having periods. Boys have wet dreams, et cetera. And they don't necessarily go around announcing to the world—

Braverman: But do they tell their best friends?

Blum: They may tell their best friends, absolutely.

Nersessian: Of course.

Harrison: They might do it with their best friends.

Blum: But there's a difference between secrets which serve development—

Harrison: It's interesting that we can't get away from sex in talking about secrets. I mean we make attempts of getting to secrets that are not about sex or sexuality. Even the word private, your private parts.

In terms of creating secrecy, I wrote a book that took place in China about a hundred years ago, and the main character had bound feet. I did a lot of research into bound feet, and one of the things that was really fascinating to me anyway was the fact that nobody saw them. They became an object of erotic focus because they were never revealed, not even to a husband. In fact, if they had been seen I don't think that they would have been seen as erotic because they were generally completely disgusting. The foot was broken. They were almost always infected. It was not a pretty thing, but the fact that they were never seen made them seductive. You know, what's under, what's in that tiny shoe? What does your little foot look like that is so different from mine? I want to see it. So they created in essence another set of private places—in fact, a private place that was more private than their genitals. A prostitute would show her genitals, but never her feet.

Blum: And there's the biblical expression, "and he knew her."

Harrison: Of course, yes.

A: The danger that you've been emphasizing that is the revealing of the secrets and the curiosity, and it all is laid to women. Now that happens to be the focus that you have made. I'd like to ask this, if anyone knows about this. Why is it though that across all cultures it seems as if women have been feared, put down and totally enslaved, across the world? This is western civilization that you're talking about. I've been wondering about this a long time.

Harrison: The power of having a baby.

Pedrick: Well, Hesiod suggests two reasons. The first is economic, and Hesiod's writing at a time when there's a transformation in the culture from sort of subsistence to cash crops, and this

more complex economy. Women's work, which had always been a major part of the household economy, was getting devalued. That's why when Hesiod condemns Pandora he doesn't condemn her for opening the jar. He doesn't even refer to this in the *Theogony*. What he condemns her for is being an example of a useless object that a man has to acquire. She doesn't do any work; she simply drains the man's work, who's going out farming, producing things. What she's doing inside the household is invisible and therefore of no value. So that's one reason why there seems to be some hatred of women is that they're consumers. They're not adding any value.

A: Not even children?

Harrison: That's the big thing, I would think.

Pedrick: Well, and the other thing is that, yes, her big source of value is she can give you an heir. But the problem is, as Telemachus says in *The Odyssey*, "No man knows his own engendering." Right? You know who your mother is, but you don't know who your father is. You only have your mother's word. So women have this great secret knowledge. They always know who a child's father is, but the father—well. I'm just giving you the Greek construction. I mean the way the Greek male mind went was the mother always knows who the father is, but the father can never be sure unless he has put the woman inside a box, contained her within the household so sharply that there can be no question that any child coming out of her is his.

A: That might have resonance with other cultures.

Pedrick: Yes. It's this terror that a woman can shame you and you won't even know it, because she'll be giving you an illegitimate child, passing it off as yours, creating pollution within the city. I'm talking like in ancient Greek here now, not in America. But, you know, there's all kinds of horrors that a woman who is not contained can perpetrate on her family and her husband and her city, whose ritual purity depends on the legitimacy of all the citizens. So I think the Greeks had two pretty sure answers: women are useless, and they're frauds. They'll pass off illegitimate children in a heartbeat.

Branham: Obviously there are so many different cultures and time periods, so that the answer to that great question is going to be varied. But I can offer just a few stabs at this that different feminist theorists have made. One of them, Nancy Jay—she's one of the great theorists who wrote on sacrifice and the origins of sacrifice. Sacrifice is multivalent in its meaning. But her whole theory was that sacrifice in itself was the male response to normal biological female kinship. As Vicky said, we always know who the woman is; she has the ability to give birth. This is a huge point in anthropological discourse and across cultures, and it is also accompanied by a lot of blood—and blood is a major factor in this whole conversation for this. The male response to forming community that she biologically has the ability to do is to have a sort of mirror process, sacrifice. She looks at different cultures and sees the male response through creating a priesthood, passing it on through this kinship as some sort of response to that. What that one example of sacrifice and that one theory points to is really the power of procreation. You asked the question why are women feared or why are women perceived as dangerous, and it's wielding a huge amount of power socially to have the powers of procreation for women. So that is important.

I would just add to that, because we did bring up sacrifice, and I think somebody put sacrifice on the title of this. When you look at even Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible, when it talks about women menstruating, the terms that are used are often the same as sacrificial blood on the altar. It's called 'purifying blood.' And what's interesting is, for example, in the Jerusalem temple the most sacred substance in that sacred complex is blood, blood on the altar, which belongs to the divine world that you sacrifice up to God. The most profane substance in that exact same space, among all of the profane substances—you know, an oozing cut or a seminal emissions, night emission, whatever—is reproductive blood, especially after a woman has had a child. How many days one has to wait to reenter the temple, compared to all the other sources of impurity, it's unparalleled, women's blood. A lot of anthropologists have written about this as a dangerous source of blood, and is it that this is sacred blood and this is profane blood, or in fact are these two bloods actually very alike in their ability to give life, in their associations with life, and maybe they might be competitive or rivalrous with each other might be one way of approaching it as well.

So that's just a huge, huge important question, but some theorists have tried to answer in those terms.

Blum: The Egyptians had another point of view about it, all of which I think are compatible. There are probably many explanations for why women were so feared. But the statue of Ramses had the queen at his knee. She was knee high to a grasshopper compared to the massive statue of Ramses. If one looks at it you see a reversal. The queen is the little child. Now the king is a great adult, the giant. In actual history of the individual the king was once the little boy of his mother. His mother was the giant and he was the little boy, and very dependent upon the all-powerful mother. First of all, he wouldn't survive in earliest infancy without mother's nurturance, care and so on. Secondly, in the course of development, in most of the cultures it is women who not only bear the child but who are involved with the care giving and care taking of the child in the early years. The nursery school teachers, the kindergarten teachers are not usually men. They're usually women. So the formative years of childhood are that the child, boys and girls, are dependent upon the great mother—that is the mother who is actually their mother and the mother figures in their early years who control their lives. There is a great deal of love with that, but also an enormous amount of resentment about being dependent and controlled and dominated by the female figures. So I think these are all compatible points of view about why women are feared.

Pedrick: Can I add a point about Pandora? You mentioned correctly that Hesiod interprets her name as "she who was given all gifts by the gods." But etymologically that's not correct. That's a folk etymology that Hesiod's giving, because it justifies what's going on in the story. Etymologically it should mean something like "she who gives all," and it's an epithet for a great mother goddess. The assumption is that maybe at some point either Pandora had a divine origin or simply an epithet for a goddess who gives all life and gives every kind of blessing. That name got attached to the very first woman as the all-giving being. Rather than she who was given everything, she is the one who bestows all blessings. So there's a great perversion in her naming that's exactly what you're talking about, because you take this all powerful figure and you make her into an object. It's a great strategy.

Blum: If Melanie Klein were here she would say that the myth represents the all-good and the all-bad object. In other words, the all-giving mother and at the same time the woman who's the all-bad object releases all this evil.

Pedrick: Right.

Harrison: And the punishing mother, the mother who doesn't give you what you want, the mother who—

Blum: —who frustrates, withholds and punishes. Yes?

A: In the Olympian gods it's interesting that Athena springs full-blown from Zeus's head, and Aphrodite comes out of the waves of the sea. In those two very important goddesses they've done away with the mother figure at all.

Blum: As is Eve, from Adam's rib.

A: Yes.

Braverman: In terms of classics, and your fields as well, Joan, I'm having a memory here of reading a feminist historian from the University of Wisconsin, Gerda Lerner—

Branham: Yes.

Braverman: In her book, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, doesn't she talk about—I mean, again, an answer to this question about how is it that women end up being on the sidelines or in this position of being oppressed cross-culturally. Isn't there something that happened in the early Mesopotamian myths that were in a sense not male-dominated, and that as we move into more of the classical myths the role of women goddesses becomes submerged, but that there was a time that that wasn't the case?

Pedrick: I think most Classicist Feminists would regretfully have to say that's a great myth. It would be nice if it were true. There do seem to be substrata to religious development and mythic development where there are truly powerful goddesses. In the near eastern myth, Ishtar and Erishkegal, who were two great goddesses of life and death are pretty scary. But the idea that they existed independent and all-dominant, I think there's not a lot of evidence for that.

Braverman: Did they exist equally? Was there more equal footing at that time?

Branham: Well, there are some theories right now that are very important. Again, I deal with the Hebrew Bible tradition, early Christianity, that say yes. How do we get to that? In biblical archeology, if you want to call it that, there've been a number of figurines found in these early, early sacred space sites where there are alters that have clearly places where two statues would have been, and when you get all of those prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible against worshipping a female goddess or against a consort it's pointing to the fact that that's exactly what people are doing. There's a recent book out by Bill Dever called *Did God Have a Wife*, and it is specifically looking at—

Blum: We know he had a son.

Branham: So it's looking at all the archeological evidence in tandem with this literary evidence to say that at certain times there seems to be enough evidence to indicate that there was a female and male deity cooperating. Clearly, we have all the literary evidence suppressing this, so that we get rid of that. That's an interesting avenue to pursue.

Pedrick: Yes, there are a lot of couples in the pre-history to myth, Greek myth and earlier. And very powerful goddesses, but I think the direction you wanted to take, that they existed independently—

Braverman: Well, I wasn't really trying to take it—I was just trying to reflect that there was a time prior to this myth that there were other myths operating that in a sense didn't end up dominating what we take as part of our cultural heritage. They're much more to the periphery.

Pedrick: I think that's right.

Braverman: So I think something different happened, both in terms of how we structure our relationships and just the whole way power and privilege get played out.

A: I'm just free-associating, but I wanted to throw out three more stories, myths, whatever, which seem to connect to women and knowing or seeing, and the woman is always punished. There's Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt for looking, I think—

Pedrick: Looking back.

A: Yes, looking back, and who knows why she wasn't supposed to look. I don't know why she wasn't supposed to look back.

Pedrick: Because he said so.

A: Yes, it seems random. Then there's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, in which he looked back but they were both punished. She had to stay underground for most of the year. And then there's Bluebeard's wife. That's a really interesting one, where there are all these locked doors and she's not supposed to open them, and when she does I think she finds a murdered wife in each one.

Branham: A lot of murdered wives.

A: Which means that she herself will be murdered. These prohibitions, they're against knowing, they're against seeing, they're against knowledge. They seem made to reinforce some kind of societal discipline or something. Anyway, I'm just throwing this out for you to talk about.

Blum: Very good.

Harrison: And of course to reinforce obedience.

Braverman: It is to reinforce obedience. It's really a prohibition against curiosity.

Harrison: Yes. He hands her the key to the room, and he says, "While I'm gone, don't use it." That's the story. And then of course she does and she discovers that he's murdered all his previous wives.

Pedrick: It's like, "Here's the tree of knowledge. Don't eat that apple."

Blum: In response to your question, there is a very close relationship with the Lot story and *Orpheus and Eurydice* to the Pandora myth and the associated myths because the warning not to look back is also, do not look back into your own past.

Harrison: Right.

Blum: Which is related to what is repressed, and to what one should not know about one's roots, one's identity, one's childhood, one's family secrets, et cetera. In other words, what Freud called 'infantile amnesia,' all the memories associated with early childhood, and they're elaborated in fantasy, are what's avoided. Lot breaks that sacred prohibition: don't look back. Don't know. But it also means don't know about your own past. It's forbidden to really open this up and learn the family secrets and the personal secrets. Orpheus has to face the same issue. He's warned that Eurydice will not be his if he looks back, and if he looks back he has to face the fact that she's irretrievably lost, that the past cannot be retrieved. In other words, that one has to face the fact that one loses one's parents, one loses objects along the way of life, and that you can't retrieve the past concretely. There's no way to do it. In facing object loss and loss of parts of the self, it's not possible, but extremely painful to face. So the stories there are certainly interlaced and interlocked, like so many secrets.

I thought one other thing we might bring up for discussion too is what comes out of the woman's box are also siblings, and the tremendous problems of sibling rivalry and sibling envy. The first murder in the bible, speaking of blood, is Cane and Abel.

Pedrick: Over a sacrifice.

Blum: Yes.

Harrison: What happens with Lot, after his wife is turned into a pillar of salt, is that he's in a cave with his two daughters. They think that all mankind except for they and their father have been destroyed, so they get him blind drunk and seduce him. But the line of David and Jesus Christ goes all the way back to an act of incest between a father and a daughter, which is interesting too.

A: They don't come from that line. They created two different families of their own. They didn't come from David, either one of them.

Nersessian: There's another question.

Blum: Yes?

A: The forgotten woman in much of the incest stories is the mother, the wife of the committer of incest. She denies the possibility, thereby investing the daughter with a great deal of guilt, that

the story can be true, as the daughter suffers. The daughter has to deal when the mother's denial is reinforced. It's curious whether such mothers ever enter into analysis, or whether the denial is too strong on facing the accusation later on—if that happens, by the daughter—whether the denial actually collapses them, as the denial is denied by the daughter, or what happens to those women in treatment if they ever do enter into treatment.

Nersessian: As I think Harold said, some of them have themselves been victims of incest.

A: Yes, so it's a secret that stays buried.

Braverman: Well, that assumes that they're not doing family work. The mother's denial in family work is one of the things that can't be denied, you know, when you bring your child.

A: It does seem to me that what the myths have shown us is that we're dependent on the female principle for the forward growth and evolution of civilization, because in every case it's a woman who commits the act which allows some kind of forward evolution.

A: That's a nice thought.

Blum: Well, we thank you all for your attention and participation.