Unraveling of the Bose–Freud Correspondence, with More Light Shed from the Freud–Rolland Correspondence and from Freud’s 1933–34 Work with H. D.

Alf Hiltebeitel

in Freud’s India: Sigmund Freud and India's First Psychoanalyst Girindrasekhar Bose

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Chapter 3 treats the final periods of both the Bose–Freud and Rolland–Freud correspondences, which peter out as Freud leaves thoughts of India behind for his final book, Moses and Monotheism, in which he gives nearly full attention to Judaism. In Rolland’s case, Freud probably tried to rekindle the friendship with his open letter, “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,” about which Roland was cold and nearly mute. With Bose, ostensibly things ended because of Bose’s not complying with Freud’s request for an article on “opposite wishes” for one of Freud’s European journals. But Freud’s verbal exchanges with the poet H. D. about Bose’s gift, the Viṣṇu statuette on Freud’s desk, give evidence of Freud’s loss of esteem for Bose and suggest that Freud thought that, like H. D., Bose had a maternal transference on him. Bose took the falling-out poorly, and in a 1938 article, before Freud’s death, debunked Freud’s second topography of the ego, id, and super-ego.

The Oedipus Mother

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Chapter 6 complements chapter 5 as a discussion of what Bose means by the Oedipus mother. Bose’s joint-parental image positions the mother as pre-Oedipal at her source in the second and third phases of Bose’s six-phase theory of child development. Bose’s concept of the pre-Oedipal Oedipus mother as a joint-parental imago bears similarities to Freud’s concept of the phallic mother, and has remarkable affinities with the maternel singulier deployed by Ilse Barande in discussing Leonardo da Vinci’s single mother, and Henri and Madeleine Vermorel’s discussion of the maternal hold of totalitarian regimes. Bose uses the phrase “joint-paternal imago” in two articles, including “The Mechanism of Defiance,” to portray the mother in a masculine super-ego role.