

## **JOSIE OPPENHEIM**

### **The Magic of Adoption: A Consideration of the Preoedipal Genesis of the Family Romance**

The magically endowed adopted child is so prevalent in myth and literature it would seem to reflect a universal fantasy signifying a structural aspect of the psyche. A small sampling of these adopted protagonists who are linked to magic include: Oedipus, Moses, Superman, Snow White, Harry Potter and Babar.

Freud's family romance describes the fantasy of having been adopted as a solution to the oedipal dilemma. In this presentation I will attempt to bring into relief the preoedipal components which form the foundation of Freud's oedipal phase fantasy. This adoption fantasy evolves, I suggest, from the rhythm of merger and separateness in early life. These pulses of magical merger and separation from the maternal environment become more frequent in normal development and coalesce in what I call "adoption experiences." i.e. the increasingly extended times when an entity other than the maternal environment takes charge of the child.

The magically adopted child functions, when encountered in myth and literature, as a conduit or pathway back to the early, sensed magical omnipotence, but what happens when we encounter a real adopted child or adult? In this case, I contend, fears relating to our own early separations are aroused and concern with genetic connection to family may function as a screen behind which lurk such repudiated fears.

Psychoanalysis is founded on the oedipal triangle. But by choosing Oedipus, a hero of dual heritage, Freud did not entirely cast aside his or our dichotomous "adoption experiences" and the universal theme of two mothers.

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