Introduction

Freud for many and Ricœur for quite a number of years have been heroes of mine, and I probably suffer from some stage of the complex malady which Harold Bloom (1973) has diagnosed as the anxiety of influence, an aspect of which is the need to surpass one's precursors. Since, on my own, I could not surpass either without employing devious means, I shall employ devious means. I shall use Ricœur to surpass Freud, specifically to correct certain aspects of his literality (following which I shall be constrained to adjust the excess of that correction), and I shall use Freud to surpass Ricœur—not, alas, at the highest reaches of his thought but at his hermeneutic starting point (Ihde, 1971, pp. 81-82), The Symbolism of Evil (Ricœur, 1969). Freud would not be at home being used in those higher regions anyway, so, with him, if I cannot go higher, I will go deeper. Via a psychoanalytic reflection on primitive presymbolic imaging I will provide a firmer foundation in that prelinguistic substrate for Ricœur's thinking on man as language and also a more archaic grounding for the privileged place he has given to the symbols of evil.

The result—also, actually my starting purpose—of a simultaneous consideration of the thought of Freud and of Ricœur in the specific area of the literal and symbolic dimensions of the daughter-father relationship, will be, I believe, to have taken some steps toward defining the crisis of literality within psychoanalysis but also manifest generally in the relationships between women and men. It is, within psychoanalysis, a crisis to which, in various
ways, I believe Kohut's (1971, 1977) psychology of the self, Schafer's (1978) new language, and the general rethinking of the psychology of women are responses.

I will approach that crisis indirectly by centering on the girl’s childhood oedipal drama where matters, relatively speaking, are simple; where the little girl, too young to have discovered what exploitative brutes males are, loves her father, just because, and where the father loves her also, just because; where the history and the literal and symbolic aspects of the drama can be explored with the hope of highlighting consequences which could shed light on what adult relationships between the sexes are or might be.

I propose here that we think of the oedipal drama in the sense of symbolic enactment and in accord with Ricœur's concept that "symbols involve a development of the self that opens up to what the symbols disclose" (1970, p. 498). The concept can refer to the most everyday kind of experience. For a pre-oedipal example, Freud's (1920, pp. 14-15; 1900, p. 461) grandson was after all, only playing a game. "Fort!," the spool is gone over the side of the crib, out of sight but not out of mind and now in pulling on the string, behold, "Da!," it reappears. Fascinating! And so it is played, over and over again. I would not myself want to spoil the fun of the game as such by attributing to the conscious thought of this eighteen-month-old one bit more of meaning than just that—"Fort," it is gone, "Da," it is there, "here we go again." But in the view of his observing grandfather, and in ours, the symbolic dimension of the spool and game, not just for Freud but also for his grandson, is clear. The context of meaning is that of his mother's absence. In the light of this real or imagined lack, the spool appears not just as spool but also as symbol. The literal game is also symbolic action wherein he not only celebrates an already partly accomplished self and object constancy through presence and absence, but also, in some measure, establishes himself, enacts himself into such a level by playing the game. And can we not then say, "Symbols involve a development of the self that opens up to what the symbols disclose"? In our symbols we are ahead of ourselves. The uninterpreted symbol comes to us as an as yet opaque indication of a direction in which we are moving or might move. They are prospective, exploratory.

For the child, the oedipal enactment gathers and organizes all the prior fragmentary fantasies of creation and destiny; more than that, by gathering and organizing, it institutes from a new vantage point curiosity, wonder,