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The Children of Oedipus. Luciano P. R. Santiago, M.D. Libra Publishers,
Inc. New York, 1973. 191 pp. \$6.95.

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Every once in a while an important resource book is published, clarifying issues, citing sources, and filling in gaps in our knowledge. The present work does this with a casualness of style that belies the

import of the subject matter. Anyone wishing to examine the theme of brother/sister incest, from Egyptian practice and Greek mythology through the Middle Ages and up to the present time, with some incisive examples from the East, will find it amply discussed in this short work by Santiago. Aware that, as the author so aptly states, man is predestined to either "see or to perish in the tyranny of the unconscious," he has amassed enough data from mythological references, historical data, literary examples and clinical motifs to sufficiently confront the denial latent in all of us of both the fact and the frequent occurrence of incest in the history of man.

There is enough awareness of cultural patterns and cross patterns for the author to show the arbitrary role of cultural taboo in a particular society's response to incest. Witness the treatment of Lord Byron by the English in 1824 and their warm response to the Hawaiian King Liholiho and his sister, Queen Kamamalu. The author also touches, although somewhat lightly, on the theme of "holy sexlessness": the medieval brother/sister duos who entered the convents and monasteries of Christendom to quiet the fire of their sensuality and to find a common "spiritual" unity, one might add, in their being part of Christ's "mystical body" (a theological term for a sense of unification with a common ego-ideal). As one reads the work in the historical perspective which the author employs, one is continually struck by the commonness of the incestuous theme (in act and certainly in desire) and the type of rejecting parenting, along with crowded living conditions, which can foster its occurrence.

The psychiatric case in the clinical section of the work is a bit weak since the therapists did not seem to know how to handle the symbiotic relationship which the therapy had brought to the fore; and, as is clear, anyone who has been involved in an incestuous relationship will have a good deal of difficulty with separation and individuation. The work, however, in no way pretends to be a textbook for clinical practice. It is, instead, a valuable historical tool for those wishing to explore this common yet highly taboo theme. One word of caution, though: while incest has undoubtedly been much more common than we have been willing to admit, there are enough other vicissitudes of human personal and sexual development not to give any of them first prize.
