

« An envelope in the mail-box »

Some considerations on the early shapings of sexuality.

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The wish to write this paper stemmed out of my analytic experience with patients, male and female, who suffered severe disturbances in the course of their sexual relationships : frigidity in women, an incapacity to experience sexual intimacy with a partner, or even with themselves during masturbation, impotence in men, from premature ejaculation or anorgasmia to a total lack of erection, even during masturbation, where the penis would remain flacid and ejaculation happen without the experiencing of orgasm, as just « the flowing out of a liquid » with no sense of a projective force, from inside out into the object.

Looking back I realize that in most cases the outcome of analysis thoroughly transformed not only their capacity for love but also the intensity of enjoyment of their sexual lives. Hence the question : what aspects of the analytic process seem to have been more effective and transformative in that respect.

A few months ago I received a letter. When I opened the envelope what first came out of it was the photo of a beautiful newborn baby's face, then a note which read :

« Dear Doctor Miller, Here is our son, Julien. When I look at him I fully realize the long road I have traveled thanks to you, during these 9 years of analysis. When I first came to see you I was lightyears away from fatherhood. Claire and I have recently decided to marry, on a whim. In short we are very happy. »

I am sure the same kind of experience happened to many of you, and you may think that I am being a bit tacky to even consider mentioning this happy ending. I shall add to my tackiness, and make my case worse, by telling you that I was moved to tears.

This young man had come to analysis at 30, his love life and sexual life desartic and deserted, feeling totally impotent, even when trying to masturbate, and also emotionally impotent. In what seemed to be a severe failure neurosis with moral masochism, a very hostile superego in both its maternal and paternal aspects, and

what I sensed as an unfortunate potential for negative therapeutic reaction. The figure of a « hard-headed intellectual woman » progressively appeared in the maternal transference, along side with an over-protective and protected paternal figure. The hard-headed mother, a scientist, was lost in her epistemophilia, forgetful of her child, not only because she was absorbed by her sexual object causing oedipal rage in the child, but more primarily because she seemed inaccessible to an emotional sharing and communication. Nesting into her head seemed to be barred, access denied, hence an accumulation of protracted rage, resentment, despair turning sour into feelings of persecution and self-destructiveness. The issue of analytic change lay, of course, in the analytic interpretation of the different oedipal aspects of the transference, of castration anxiety relating to separation anxieties, in the « slow dismantling of the hostile superego » as Freud put it. But how could these interpretations become meaningful if they came from a hard-headed mother before the infant could experience the capacity to break in, penetrate and explore mother's psychic space ?

The early shapes of communication seem to be at the core of sexual dysfunctions in adults. Their unfolding in the course of analysis, in the subtle unconscious interplay of transference and countertransference, enables their slow working through, the analyst becoming gradually aware of their specificities, very often through the occurrence of his own enactments, parapraxes and « slips » of all sorts. Most of the time we are dealing with issues of *penetrability, permeability and receptivity*. These very early forms of interplay contribute to the construction of the psychic apparatus but they are also experienced at a stage where the bodily aspects of the ego are prevalent. Their shapes have to do with all kinds of different forms of interpenetration of the infant's and mother's psychic spaces, experienced as pleasurable or unpleasurable sensations shaped by all aspects of sensoriality.

Here is a simplified way of describing the idea I would like to explore, relying on a modelisation by Winnicott. In the first weeks of the infant's existence, the mother can surrender to what Winnicott has described as a normal kind of madness. In such a state she can, for instance, wake up just seconds before her baby starts crying. This psycho-somatic continuity between infant and mother's bodily ego tends to reduce the frequency and intensity of disruptions by internal traumatic quantitative discharges. I

assume that this repeated experience of an adaptative psychic and bodily response to need can potentially lay a foundation, in particular in the way sexual intercourse will be experienced by the adult. I am not talking about a direct causality, but a potentiality. I think, for instance, it can lay a foundation to the capacity of letting oneself merge with the other in the experience of intercourse and orgasm and feel less threatened by the loss of boundaries that it implies.

An infant whose mother could not surrender to this state of transitory madness might, in later life, have more difficulty surrendering to the experience of merging with the other in the course of sexual intercourse. It may be anticipated as potentially violent and shattering, defences will be put in place to prevent it from happening, resulting, for instance, in premature ejaculation or anorgasmia. Once again, I am aware that I am isolating just one aspect, rooted in a very primitive experience, and that the construction of the capacity to experience sexual drive intensity together with object love depends on a multiplicity of factors, each overdetermined by the others, in a long, multilayered history.

I shall now turn to a short clinical narrative. I was expecting a woman for a first consultation. When I opened the door she was standing there, motionless, clad in a long black leather coat, a young woman in her twenties. My first thought was « She has just stepped out of a movie by Almodovar ». Her face was very immobile, white and made up in such a way as to make it appear like a mask. A fearful mask indeed, inducing a cold sense of being rejected and judged. Her gaze was black and still. She was hard and impenetrable, so much so that I failed to realize that she was very pretty. Once seated she began talking relentlessly, in a sharp voice, each word very clear and detached. Her discourse was becoming increasingly aggressive, the usual negative thoughts one can hear about psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts, and of course she could already sense that I was going to be one of those cold, remote, totally silent analysts. It was amazing to witness the growing intensity of her hostility. After a while I ventured to say that I noticed how angry and increasingly aggressive she was, that I was wondering why it was so and asked her if she was aware of it and had any idea where it came from.

She paused, and then sighed, as if breathing for the first time. Her stiff body mellowed and something quite difficult to describe changed in her eyes. I had been confronted to two small hard black buttons with an icy glaze on them shooting arrows at me. Suddenly it was as if they were opening up, the pupils dilating into a shadowy space inviting and absorbing, as if she was calling me in, reverting her gaze within and for the first time I had a sense that she was looking at me. In a hesitant and affect-laden voice she said : « I think it is because I am scared. »

After a few years of analysis the patient narrated a dream : She was in bed with a woman making love to her. In the dream the patient had a penis and would eventually penetrate deep into this woman and have a very pleasurable intercourse with her.

At this stage in her analysis change was occurring in her inner world and in her life. She was moving away from a very glossy, glamorous, high-speed show-biz world full of phallic narcissistic challenges, fierce oedipal battles and dreadful separation agonies to a more subdued environment where privacy, intimacy and emotional encounters were discovered and valued, where for the first time she was not only looking for a man who would be an exciting lover but who could also become a father to the children she might have with him.

The dream formation uses overtly sexual elements, obviously leading to ideas of homosexual desire and penis envy. But these elements, in the context of the maternal transference, are retroactively used to give shape and meaning to an evolving psychic intercourse between infant and mother, between analysand and analyst. Beyond penis envy, the image of the penis is used in the dream in a figurative way to depict the capacity to penetrate mother's psyche and to enter in an active and pleasurable intercourse with her. Thus it is also depicting the transformation occurring within the analytic process from excess of projective identification desperately trying to break into mother's psyche in an overload of angry excitation to a pleasurable psychic interpenetration.

The early shapes of psychic interplay are laden with sexual anticipation, the construction of infantile sexuality and the expressions of sexuality in adults are determined and shaped by the qualities of early bodily interpsychic experiencing.

My patient thought boys were better equipped to explore mother and to be understood by mother because they possess a specially designed contraption which enables them to do it. How does a girl manage to communicate with mother if she doesn't have a penis, or if she has lost it ? Such were some of the predicaments my patient had tried to come to terms with in her infantile sexual theories. Analysts grapple with the same questions in their attempts to construct sexual theories of the mind, or theories of the mind shedding light on sexuality.

If we take the Bionian conception of normal projective identification as one possible model of the early development of psychic life and of a psychic apparatus, we see that it's first stage has the form of a penetration *into* the maternal psychic space, the penetration being facilitated, or made difficult, sometimes impossible, by the disposition of the maternal mind. This model is prone to be figured or retroactively illustrated by masculine, phallic representations. This is quite consistent with Freud's theory of libido being of masculine essence.

The bodily psychic action of evacuation of beta elements into the container (mother's psyche) in the process of what is called projective identification is actively experienced by male and female infants. Does it constitute a nuclear form of masculine sexuality in both sexes ? In other words, and to follow my Almodovarian patient's preoccupations (but also many women's) : how does a woman experience her vagina as actively sexual ? And how does it also relate, if it does, to projective identification ? or : is there an active vaginal sexual orgasmic pleasure not related to penis envy, aggressive castration drives, oral cannibalism or anal retention ? What is actively passive in sexual pleasure in both sexes ?

In order to explore this question in terms of early mental development, I guess we should turn to the second phase of projective identification : the (re)introjection, constitutive of the growing mind, of elements metabolised by mother's psyche. This process of introjection is also active, but more likely to be depicted as an invagination. Not only does it take in the metabolised elements but also the process of metabolism itself. I think that the « essential » vaginal orgasm has to do with this introjection of the metabolising process. In that respect it would be *a nuclear form of feminine sexuality in both sexes*. The quality of introjection (and sometimes the mere

possibility of introjection) is totally dependant on the quality of the metabolisation taking place in the primary object's psyche. If mechanisms of pathological projective identification are prevalent in the primary object's psyche, the process of introjection, depending on the quality of metabolisation, is maimed and sometimes destroyed. Especially the pleasurable experience associated with it, which contributes greatly to the elaboration and construction of psychic growth. In that respect sexual pleasure, and in particular sexual pleasure called « passive » and which, in fact, is always *actively* passive, is relating to early introjective capacities, and hence to a capacity for emotional growth and psychic development alongside with a progressive linking and unification of erogeneous zones. In the case of an excess of projective identification of mother *into* the infant's psychic space there occurs a deadly passivation of the infant's psyche, with an injection instead of an introjection.

Another young woman, a very talented artist, came to analysis because she felt suicidal and her working capacities collapsing. She thought of herself as a lesbian, although she said that she could not be touched by anyone, including herself. Her sexual life consisted of giving pleasure to her partners, either manually or with a dildo. She had developed extraordinary intellectual capacities, certainly in great part, as a defence against a very crazy, borderline mother who made her live in an environment of permanent eroticised excitation, not buffered in any way by the father, and who used her child's mind to evacuate her raw elements. It was very difficult for the analytic process to develop into a psychic growth process. I was submitted to an inflation of cerebralised material flooding my ears and my mind but mostly barring any access, and actually preventing me from « penetrating » and « touching » her. She was talking a lot, the material was controlled, already « elaborated » and « analysed » so as to make my interventions useless, there was no representation of a possible working together, interplay, intercourse, were denied.

Some time into the analysis, a Monday session, she recounted that the previous Saturday she had gone on a stroll and was walking on the quai de la Mégisserie where you can find shop after shop selling all sorts of plants, nurseries actually. It was a very sunny day, there were lots of people, and in this very animated crowd she heard a voice which instantly gave her pleasure and made her feel good. Then she thought the

voice was familiar, a man's voice, her analyst's voice. She turned and then she saw me : I was talking with a shopkeeper and discussing some issues about plants¹. She felt flooded with happiness. All of a sudden she realised I was a living creature interested in life and how to help plants grow. This marked a turning point in the analysis and her growing capacity to relate to me as an object whom she could trust enough to bully but also to listen to.

Masculine and feminine qualities of the psychic apparatus.

The polarities of masculinity and femininity and the notion of a primal or original scene (Ur scene) are always present in the different models of the origins of psychic life, trying to describe a time of the beginnings of psychic life when *representations* of sexual difference do not have a meaning as such for the infant but are very present and meaningful in the mental lives of his/her parents. In analytic listening bisexuality appears in the form of different psychic formations such as fantasies, dreams, identifications and through the different transference places that we, as analysts, are called to occupy. These psychic formations are very elaborate representational forms of the psycho-sexual organisation of a person. Behind these complex representations and stagings, more elementary psychic movements are at work in analytic listening, which we could consider as pre-forms of sexual difference.

I am going to interrogate modelisations of the beginnings of psychic life, mostly Bion's, with some links to Winnicott's. My wish was to include Piera Aulagnier's concepts and examine similarities and differences with Bion's. Unfortunately, for obvious lack of time I shall only be able to make one or two hints.

As a backdrop to different modelisations of the origins of psyche are Freud's models of the emergence of psychic life : in particular the notions of psychic apparatus and of psychic drive derivative. The psychic apparatus is a device transforming somatic quantities and energies into representations and thoughts endowed with psychic qualities. This apparatus is performing a work but is also the end result of the work it

¹ It was not a delusion.

is performing. It is governed by a paradox : it is fabricated out of the living phenomena of the organism which, on the other hand, it is supposed to process and metabolize. When Bion broadens the notion of projective identification first described by M. Klein, what he is describing is not a pathological phenomenon anymore, but one which is at the very foundation of psyche. In order to become humanised and to develop a mind, not just a brain, the infant needs to propel the raw elements of somatic experience, the sensory perceptions, into a human mind able to transform them into elements which can be mentally processed. There is an innate expectancy that the environment will perform this task in such a way that the need will be met. In order to describe this phenomenon Bion uses the notions of content going into a container in order to be contained. A very specific aspect of Bion's approach is that the container is modified in the process of containment. In my reading this notion of expectancy implies a certain complementarity between content and container for the process of containment to be achieved. This notion of complementarity is very important in Piera Aulagnier theorising of what she calls « l'originnaire » (the original), the encounter between a « zone » and its complementary object and her notion of pictograms (where Bion talked of ideograms) being at the same time the representation of the affect and the affect of the representation. At the origin of psychic life there is the notion of an encounter, a kind of primal scene happening both intra-psychically and intersubjectively.

For Bion « Both container and contained are models of abstract representations of psycho-analytic realizations »². So he needs more abstraction in order to designate container and contained and he leaps to an amazing decision :

« I shall use the sign ♀ for the abstraction representing the container and ♂ for the contained. » He adds that both signs (which are actually pictograms) « denote and represent ». I hope the oral presentation that I am in the process of doing will manifest some of the powerfully evocative aspects of Bion's abstraction, which in fact, in a kind of formal regression, place us as we read and listen in a peculiar kind of experience. I cannot read the pictograms I have to show them to you and to point at them. Any word I would use would miss the complexity of what is being designated and

² Learning from experience, p.90, Maresfield Reprints.

conveyed : feminine, or woman, of vagina, or matrix for ♀ and on the other hand : masculine, penis, man for ♂ wouldn't do.

Something is represented which cannot be said in words and yet brings words and thoughts in mind. Something at the dawn of psychic activity which has to do with femininity and masculinity but which, in itself, does not yet pertain to the sexual attributes of man and woman. At this stage the only difference which is about to take place is between self and non-self. However Bion's abstraction links this first differentiation to sexual difference.

Let me explore further Bion's bold decision. There exists a dynamic circulation between ♂ and ♀ which Bion represents thus : ♂★♀, a relation he calls « commensal » :

« By commensal I mean ♂ and ♀ are dependant on each other for mutual benefit and without harm to either. In terms of a model the mother derives benefit and achieves mental growth from the experience : the infant likewise abstracts benefit and achieves growth. »³

This is a description of a fertile primal scene giving birth to psychic life. In order to emphasize this idea of copulation and primal scene let me quote Bion saying that « a pre-conception *mates* with the appropriate sense impressions »⁴.

The activity ♂★♀ which is described as being shared by two minds is introjected by the infant. Bion describes this first introject as an apparatus, the apparatus ♂♀. This apparatus is being installed in the infant's mind and will function as part of the alpha function apparatus.

This apparatus ♂♀ is the germ of psychic development. Emotion penetrates the elements ♂ and ♀ and either joins them or disjoins them. Here I want to point the proximity of this model with Piera Aulagnier's concepts of a pictogram of junction and a pictogram of rejection as forming the two possible activities of the mind at the origin. (quotation ?). Emotion allows two elements ♂ and ♀ to function as an apparatus. Actually the *qualities* of the emotions will determine the modalities of functioning of this apparatus. Emotion is a variable which joins together or disjoins ♂ and ♀. The

³ Idem, p.91

⁴ idem p.91

capacity for re-shaping of ♀, which is also its capacity for *receptivity*, depends on the replacement of one emotion by another. Just as the capacity for penetration of the ♂ elements will depend on the value of emotion.

The growth of ♂ and ♀ has to do with the capacity to take into the self the sensory impressions. This capacity develops alongside with the capacity to become aware of sensory data. The activity between ♂ and ♀ allows for a first self-perception of oneself in the act of perceiving.

In « An Outline of Psycho-analysis » Freud reminds us that « the core of our being is formed by the obscure *id* ». He goes on to write that « The *id* knows no solicitude about ensuring survival and no anxiety ». And then, as often happens while he writes, in a sort of internal dialogue with himself, he has a second thought : « or it would perhaps be more correct to say that, though it can generate the sensory elements of anxiety, *it cannot make use of them.* »⁵ These self-perceptions within the *id* are coenaesthetic feelings and feelings of pleasure-unpleasure and they rule with a despotic force without any consideration for self-preservation. The latter will be the task set for the *ego*.

In Bionian terms one might say that ♂ does not encounter ♀. When ♂ starts encountering ♀, and if an apparatus ♂♀ begins to exist allowing ♂★♀ then the possibility is met for the emergence of a drive representative.

This task of self-preservation is seen in Bion's model in the trajectory of the projective identification when the « fear of dying » is metabolized by the active receptivity of ♀. If the metabolisation (*rêverie*) is succesful the infant will introject a part of his personality which has become more tolerable and, in this very process of becoming more tolerable, is growth stimulating. If it fails : « The infant who started with a fear he was dying ends up by containing a *nameless dread.* » Actually when Bion uses the expression « fear of dying » he is describing what the infant is experiencing in a way which already implies a mental apparatus capable of creating representations linked together by a thinking activity. What the infant is experiencing is more likely to be a kind of organismic helplessness implying a threat of extinction biologically triggered.

⁵ Freud, SE, Vol.XXIII, p.199

It acquires a psychic meaning through the mother's fear of seeing her child die (if such is the case).

In some patients the prospect of a sexual encounter awakens the shadow of this « nameless dread » and urges them to give up. Giving up can be, secondarily, implemented through the agency of a dreadful super-ego or in the name of castration anxiety.

A mail box

The process of changing in the course of analysis implies finding a capacity for change and growth in both partners. Penetrability and permeability are enabled by plasticity. As you know one of the major discoveries of contemporary neuro-biology is the formidable plasticity of the human brain throughout life. An analogon of what has been described by Bion's abstractions, at the dawn of psychic activity, is likely to happen in the course of treatment. It is a daily source of puzzlement in our analytic practice to realize how much we are tempted to resist our capacity for plasticity. I am not talking here about the « elasticity of technique » as Ferenczi named it, but the elasticity of our minds as they are put to work with another human's mind in a specific frame of work.

It has become a habit to say that the analytic pair is a couple. If such is the case we need to better understand what kind of copulation is going on, what are the different aspects of the intercourse, and how they end up being sterile or procreative.

Some years ago, in a foreign land, I was having lunch with a dear friend who is also a colleague. We always speak English together as she doesn't speak French. At some point in our conversation she said she was very preoccupied by an analytic treatment and she would like to take this opportunity of an « extra-territorial » listener to discuss the case with me. She had had in analysis, in english and for many years a very gifted young woman, a brilliant academic, also stunningly beautiful. A lot of analysis had been done, the analyst even thought it might be time for termination but she had a feeling of failure, she feared an interminable analysis or a negative therapeutic reaction. She felt that the analysand did not really accept her interpretations and could

not use them for herself. As I listened I formed the general idea that the patient could not experience pleasure, that she could not metabolize what the analyst was giving her, or men in her life, into food for psychic growth. She might defensively be refusing satisfaction in order to avoid the pain of separation, but it seemed also that she didn't know what maturing and developing meant and that, each time her analyst attempted to give her an interpretation she had the feeling that the analyst was taking something away from her. I communicated this to my friend and then I felt like asking her if any elements having to do with bisexuality had appeared in the course of analysis. She immediately answered : « Well, of course, fantasies », but she seemed to be absorbed by something else. After a pause : « It's really amazing, when you asked your question, a moment of her analysis suddenly came back to my mind which I had completely forgotten. It was the end of the month and the patient had to pay for her sessions, but somehow it seemed difficult. During the session she thought she would come back with a check and put it in the mailbox. Then she said : « *No, it's impossible, I cannot put a check in the mailbox.* »

My friend went on : « It is strange, I had heard male in mail-box, and I remember immediately repeating : a male box ? with my intonation underlining male. But I had not linked it to projective identification and to my counter-transference, so we couldn't do anything with it.

One can think about this vignette of analytic work from many angles. I'll start with one aspect which I'll call : the tyranny of significance⁶ and the obligation to understand as a resistance, expressed in secondary thought processes, to let ♂ and ♀ freely copulate together in a fertile relationship producing psychic growth.

Let's single out the patient's sentence : « I cannot put a check in the mailbox and decide that it is a manifestation of both transference and counter-transference. Let's then single out the three main elements composing this sentence : I cannot put...in, check, and mailbox.

I cannot put...in : seems to indicate that the movement of normal projective identification ♂ ♀ is being hindered. We can imagine that some elements in the patient

⁶ By using significance instead of meaning I am trying to convey the difference in French between signification and sens.

inhibit this trajectory. We can also think that, in the analyst in the presence of this particular patient, ♂♀ cannot function in a commensal mode. That neutrality is not sufficient to favour receptivity. Penetrability of ♂ is reduced, compromising the remodelling potentialities of ♀.

The container (box = ♀) in which the patient wants to drop a content (♂) is a male box. Can male box be depicted by : ♂♀ or ♂★♀ ? At another level of psychic functioning : does « male box » represent a bisexual fantasy, or a primal scene where psychic positions can shift ? It seems, from the original point of view, that « malebox » is a paradoxical container. It looks like a container which cannot take anything in because it is bearing a ♂ preventing access. My association is with an antibody in immunology. It may somehow relate to the fantasy of a mother with a penis. The desire that mother be endowed with a penis would run contrary to the need to deposit a content in her psyche.

Sexual fantasmatic representations would be touchstones of primary psychic movements where the maternal ♂♀ apparatus could not stand to be penetrated by the infant's drive activity.

The Winnicottian model for this is : impingement.

This brings us to the countertransferential aspect of mailbox. I choose only one aspect and one manifestation : « I understood that in mailbox there is male and I immediately tell my patient. » and then : « I understood, but my patient can't do anything with my understanding because I failed to make links. » Here we are reaching the theme of potential relationships between interpretation, insight and working through.

« Male » seems to have become something like an exciting object in the analyst's mind, diminishing the potentialities of mutual transformation between container and contained. In this context, the thought : « You see, I understood, here is what it means. » may be some kind of evacuation.

It may be felt by the patient like a confirmation of the fact that she cannot put ♂ in ♀ because ♂.

The winnicottian model for this is : retaliation.

Here is the way Bion tries to shed light on the use of ♀ :

« It may make my meaning clearer if I say that I am in a state of receptive observation as opposed to a state in which I pass judgment on what I observe. I can further describe it approximately by saying I become absorbed in my task of observation or that I am absorbed in the facts. »⁷

I should further add that the use of ♀ « indicates that the reader's comprehension of my meaning »- or in fact the analyst's comprehension, or your comprehension as you are listening to me now- « should contain an element that will remain unsatisfied until he meets the appropriate realization (...). »⁸

This can be referred, in Freudian terms, to the necessary and specific factors of analytic listening, i.e neutrality and free-floating attention and to the dynamic relationship existing between the two psychic dispositions in the course of the analytic process.

Neutrality means that one should not privilege one (♂) over the other (♀) and that it is best to let them lead their lives one with the other (apparatus ♂♀). The reference here to the primal scene is obvious, a primal scene understood as a primary representation of the encounter between infant and object, between psyche and soma, giving birth to the life of the mind.

Free floating attention means that the analyst's psychic space can let itself be penetrated by an infinite number of elements (♂) which follow their illimited trajectories and can, within that space, remain disseminated and scattered. This aspect of free floating attention corresponds to the Freudian representation of « the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown. »⁹

The fluctuations of attention in free floating give a containing function to the space where the illimited phenomena are happening. The dynamic interaction between the fluctuations and the illimited trajectories allow for the possibility to bring together scattered and dispersed elements and favour the emergence of psychic events we call interpretations. It is the containing function of free floating attention.

The third element : « a check » opens up to the potentialities of polysemia in analytic listening, and how they correlate with free-floating attention, neutrality and free

⁷ Learning from experience, p.95

⁸ id. p.96

⁹ Freud, SE Vol V, p.525

association. The capacity to let oneself be carried away by polysemia and to let it operate in our minds with the help of free floating attention goes hand in hand with changes in vertex, with the mobility of identificatory positions in the primal scene fantasy and with the infinite possibilities of combination in bisexual fantasies along a spectrum going from masculinity to femininity. A check is a piece of paper with a name and an address on it, it has to do with some form of identity being deposited. It also, obviously, is related to money and its retention. But to check is also to control, to verify. It is very likely the patient wants to place a bridge-head and a homing-head into the analyst in order to explore her interior and to control it. The exploration is also an attempt at checking and immobilising. If it is experienced by the analyst as an intrusion the analyst can be tempted to guard the entrance by a check-point : ♂.

Now if we place ourselves in the perspective of the evolution of ideas concerning technique, we can point at some historical landmarks concerning the relationship between theory and the subjective implication of the analyst in the analytic process. Here are three aspects of the same question from Freud's perspective :

- 1) Theory : Libido is masculine in essence.
- 2) Countertransference : It is difficult for me to be the mother in the transference, I feel so masculine.
- 3) Clinical illustration (a heavy weight in the psycho-analytic heritage) : The analytic relationship between Freud and Ferenczi. A letter Ferenczi wrote to Groddek¹⁰ shows that the negative aspects of the transference to Freud correspond to character traits of Ferenczi's mother and confirm that, under cover of the Vater complex in the transference, Freud was unable to address and confront the negative maternal transference.

Four years after Ferenczi's death Freud writes « Analysis terminable and interminable », a theoretical meditation stemming out of Ferenczi's reproach that Freud had not analysed his negative transference. It is no wonder that the idea of a so called biological bedrock of bisexuality comes in the course of this meditation and is related to negative therapeutic reaction .

¹⁰ Quoted by Judith Dupont in her introduction to the french publication of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondance.

How can a bedrock be transformed, other than with dynamite ?

A patient for many years dreamt about rocky mineral landscapes which could only be shaken up by his explosions of rage. In his dreams and associations his mother was hard as rock, usually a marble statue or a barren stone vault. He had been brutally chased from paradise early in his life by siblings, but also by traumatic events which had plunged his mother in an unreachable recess of depression. Many transferenceal tempests later in the analysis, as he was slowly reconnecting with a desirable maternal object, impotency symptoms (premature ejaculation) began to appear which raised a lot of sarcastic comments addressed to psychoanalysis and voiced by an internal father who was the leading saboteur of his inner world. Reconnecting with a loving, loveable and desired mother meant a cataclysmic change in his defences, triggered the worst aspects of his hostile super-ego or, if you prefer, all the bad guys in the chorus of his internal group.

Towards the end of analysis, during a session when he felt he didn't have much to say, he recounted « a little unimportant dream » : he was eating an artichoke, but actually the artichoke was entirely made up of scallop meat (coquille Saint-Jacques in French). He was eating with a little spoon (he didn't say whether it was a silverspoon) it was extremely tender and smooth, which surprised him because an artichoke is usually defended by leaves ending like spikes, and inside, before you can reach to the tender heart, you must take out those brushes, like hay, softer than the leaves, but yet prickly. He started circulating in boundless associative paths. If the artichoke was a peculiar kind of breast, the dream and the dreamwork in the session, including my own free associations became a very good breast indeed yielding food for analysis, ♂ ♀ and ♂ ★ ♀. I cannot follow here all the associative paths for lack of time. But the coquille Saint-Jacques was soon associated to Venus and the opening of the artichoke to a cunnilingus, joining in a very elaborate and overdetermined representation the nipple, the oral orifice, the tongue, the penis and the vagina, the nipple as ♂ being transformed into ♀. A convex shape becoming concave, a saliency being transformed into a pregnancy. In the dream, as he was relishing the tender meat, he realized that there were one or two fishbones. « Arêtes » in French, which sounds like : « arrête » the imperative form of the verb meaning « stop ». At one point he said he was thinking

of the incredible intensity of excitation while performing a cunnilingus which he had not experienced in a long time. I said : « It seems there is a little voice in this artichoke telling you : arrête, stop. » He laughed.

It is now time for me to stop and allow for the mating of pictograms to go on.