INTRODUCTION/PRESENTATION

This study does not intend to give an overview of French psychoanalysis. It aims, rather, to show one psychoanalyst at work in his daily practice, with no special effort made to present French psychoanalysis through a narcissistic - or biased - prism. My intention is to formulate a working document acquainting the reader, on the one hand, with the range of perspectives available to an up-to-date French psychoanalyst, the perspectives constituting the theoretical foundation particular to his own work and to that of his psychoanalytic community; and, on the other hand, with psychoanalytic work itself, as it unfolds, with all its imperfections, all the while keeping in mind the implicit reactions of a reader from another psychoanalytic culture, who will draw parallels based on this own view of what constitutes psychoanalytic practice.

I chose this double-focus approach because, on the one hand, it exposes expected differences through the author's interpretation of intercultural difference and, on the other, reveals unexpected contrasts thanks to the fact that the clinical work unveils implicit or unconscious aspects of the interaction in terms of cultural particularities not identified as such at the outset. The debate can thus hold certain surprises, and it may be that the points of controversy will not be those I originally foresaw. Of course, the other French psychoanalysts present at the meeting may not feel that I speak for them. In fact, differences within French psychoanalytic practice may be as profound as those opposing this practice to that of other psychoanalytic cultures.

No one can, in fact, speak in the name of French psychoanalysis as such since, in this field as in others, multiplicity reigns. It is this very fact which contributes to the richness and creativity of psychoanalytic thought. However, it may be possible to represent this thought based on a certain consensus which includes a wide enough and representative enough portion of French language psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, choices had to be made. I opted for selecting from the current body of treatment theory those positions which are the most common and the most widespread, even though, for each point discussed, considerable variances in definition and emphasis do in fact exist. I felt that these variances had more to do with the interpretation of certain elements than with the fundamental character accorded these perspectives by a great majority of psychoanalysts. I am aware that my arguments could be criticized by one or the other of the most eminent French psychoanalysts. However, I do not want to abandon the task I undertook, even
though one of its obvious consequences is to bring into question my own view of 
psychoanalytic work, which I must presume to be representative of that of a large 
number of psychoanalysts. I have deliberately omitted to discuss those of my 
positions which are least likely to be shared, which might be called the most 
idiosyncratic.

One further methodological point must be mentioned. I thought it relevant 
to present a clinical session in order to show concretely how the underlying 
assumptions of the work are applied in the interventions made during the free 
association process. I chose an ordinary session, one which has no exemplary or 
transferable characteristics either in content, process or quality of interpretation. I 
am neither particularly pleased or displeased with the work accomplished that 
day. I chose it simply to represent daily practice, to exemplify the "ordinary", with 
all its qualities and imperfections. Of course, the fact remains that each session is a 
unique event in the course of treatment and, as such, exemplifies nothing other 
than itself. But a session can be representative enough of a certain style of 
psychoanalysis, can display the expected elements of a certain style of work. 
Therefore, what remained to be done was to find a way of choosing a session based 
on nothing other than the ordinariness of its character.

Following H. Faimberg's request, I promised myself to pay special attention 
to next day's first session. I know, of course, that this choice was not purely 
accidental - I knew unconsciously who would be likely to provide the material. 
Taking notes during the session and knowing that I would rewrite these notes 
certainly affected my listening on this occasion. Nevertheless, my choice denoted 
the intention of having no other a priori prerequisites than finding an appropriate 
object for this discussion, and thus also showed my expectation that the session 
would be typical. When it was over, although I had no reason to be particularly 
satisfied or dissatisfied with its content or the quality of my interpretative work, 
and not finding it to be particularly explicit as to the things I wish to highlight, I 
nevertheless found it to be sufficiently "ordinary" or "average" to serve my 
purpose. This session, which is a good example precisely because of its banality, 
contains implicitly or explicitly the main points I wish to discuss. When they don't 
come up directly, I will be able to uncover them without forcing the material too 
much. This session and its content will therefore constitute the background of a 
commentary which, transposed to the concrete process of treatment, contains the 
esential characteristics of French psychoanalysis, of the step-by-step microanalysis 
which takes place in one session.

I will also present another clinical session, perhaps less ordinary, drawn 
from a difficult period of treatment, where the question of relation to past history 
becomes central since it determines the types of intervention the analyst is 
prompted to make during the session. This example illustrates the attempted 
reconstruction, in the session, of a primal traumatic scene which invades, or seems 
to invade, the patient's present reality and the process of transference. Hopefully, 
this illustration will allow us to discuss the actual role of history, its 
reinterpretations ex post or the absence of the latter. In any case, this example 
should open a discussion on our concept of transference in relation to traumatic
events, to lived experience and, above all, to temporality, the central theme of our meeting.

PSYCHOANALYTIC LISTENING

Clinical material is not intelligible unless it is heard in a particular manner. In itself, it means nothing. It must be viewed in a certain light and, for this, a certain analytic *vertex* must be used. The material is meaningful based on a particular theory or a particular presupposition of the analyst, who makes it meaningful, who constructs its meaning. Therefore, we must define "average" presuppositions, those which are implicit in the listening, as well as the theory of the analysis in which they play this part.

I believe that most French psychoanalysts would agree that the essence of treatment theory resides in the work of symbolization of past history and in the subjective appropriation this makes possible. In order to avoid idealizing psychoanalytic work, we could say that the aim of treatment is to try to optimize the subject’s ability to symbolize. This definition does not preset the degree of symbolization which should be achieved: the latter varies from subject to subject, according to their particular histories and/or their instinctual or genetic heritage. It is, however, a definition which points to the major vector of psychoanalysis. Symbolization stresses representational work (in general, there are several types of symbolization), as well as its affective appropriation.

This definition reiterates Freud’s "Wo es war soll ich verden" (Where it was, there shall I go), which identifies the general tendency of psychoanalytic work as being the fine tuning of the subjective appropriation of lived experience, and of the historical particularity of its outcome.

The lived experience to be symbolized involves the past history of drives, as well as the history of their relation to their "objects" and the particular characteristics of these objects. Lived experience refers just as much to present subjectivity (ego-subject) as to the manner in which the latter was constructed/deconstructed throughout the patient’s history, under the double demands of instinctual pressure (and thus of the history of the latter) and of the objects of instinct (and thus of the history of the reactions and requirements of these objects in the face of the subject’s instinctual and narcissistic demands). Thus, lived experience is seen to be located at the crossroads of drives, objects and the way in which the ego-subject managed the drive-object relation (the history of the subject’s relation to himself and to his own ability to process what happens to him).

Symbolization of past history has as its aim the ideal subjective integration (by the conscious and unconscious ego-subject) of this history and of the transformations the ego-subject operates upon it in order to appropriate it. During the session, the analyst listens for past and present manifestations of symbolization work carried out by the analysand. The attention of the analyst, therefore, focuses on what the ego-subject has to symbolize, as well as on the particularities of the
devices used to symbolize (or to avoid having to symbolize) what it now has, or what it has had, to confront.

This general definition of psychoanalytic work, of its vectors and of its framework, provides a basic idea of the manner in which the analysand is listened to during a session. It provides a rudimentary matrix for describing psychoanalytic work, but is not sufficient in itself. The psychoanalyst needs an additional notion, that of "horizon", the factor which can act as a vector for the psychic suffering contained in the history; in other words, the factor which makes sense of and gives direction to this suffering. To speak of integration we must use a representation of integrative structure, a matrix of psychic integration.

In the larger sense, this integrative structure, in France, seems to be the Oedipal structure. Referring to the Oedipal structure implies, first of all, a reference to infantile history and its organizing character for personality structure and for structuring the ability to symbolize this infantile history and appropriate it subjectively. Such a reference point establishes a certain order of the intersubjective reality inescapably woven into the construction of the ego-subject.

Reference to Oedipal structure reminds us that the ego-subject did not come into existence on its own, that it was built and built itself, both at the biological and psychological levels, out of its relation to the other, its confrontation with otherness and even with multiple forms of otherness. Oedipus concerns the past or present relation of the subject with this otherness, which is at the same time that of the other in general (as a prototype) and that of the other distinguished by generational and/or gender difference. The relation to the difference of the other as object of instinctual impulses and, at the same time, as subject of these impulses (and thereby different), and the relation to the difference of the other determined by age and gender, form a dialectic within a certain Oedipal configuration which characterizes the particularity of the symbolization framework of the ego-subject.

Using the Oedipus as the horizon defining the work of symbolization means that dealing with difference (of the three types mentioned above) is central to this work, that symbolization has an organizing function, and that it cannot be understood or explained without referring to difference. Symbolizing past history means processing it based on the particular way in which this history confronts (or has confronted) difference within the drive demands/object demands dialectic, and on the particular ways in which it dealt with this difference and its impact. For our purposes, Oedipus must be understood in its larger sense, as a concept which defines the space of psychic intelligibility, and not in the narrow sense sometimes attributed to it in France, and which concerns a specific Oedipal organization: that of subjects said to be sufficiently "neurotic".

Structural reference to this concept does not imply a bias of prior knowledge on the part of that analyst as to the psychic destiny of the analysand. It simply provides a matrix of intelligibility for the symbolization process, without prejudicing the course of subjective appropriation of which the analysand is capable, and which will constitute the actual "thread" of the psychoanalytic process. The psychoanalyst does not know in advance how the analysand's
process of association will unfold, that is, he is in the dark as to what will take place in the session (he is in a state of "unknowing" which bears witness to the otherness of the analysand, to the latter's unforeseeable character, that is, to a living character which cannot be predetermined), but he knows that his work will try to facilitate the symbolization of what is to come, and that this symbolization will, in one way or another, at the moment it occurs or later, have to refer back to the defining and integrative matrix of subjectivity, that is, to the Oedipus as we have identified it above.

THE PRIMAL SCENE AND ITS COROLLARIES

Adopting this stance implies that a central role will be assigned to the psychic formation which sustains the matrix: Freudian theory attributes this role to the primal fantasy known as "the primal scene", which I propose to present as an organizing concept of psychoanalytic listening, and not merely as a primal fantasy. What makes it a concept is the fact that it represents the matrix which integrates the psychic impulses of the subject, within which these impulses acquire meaning, or in relation to which they could not acquire meaning in the past. Placing lived experience in a historical context can only be properly understood as part of the dialectical relation of this experience with the structural matrix I just defined, with the "irresistible pull" of the organizing function ascribed to the matrix.

In this representation, as in any complex representation, there is a conjunction: the coming together of three subjective poles related/differentiated in a psychic formation containing the three types of difference underlined above, and the way in which these various differences are treated from the standpoint of filiation and of drive relations;
- the relation of the subject with his original-scene objects as parents and as sexual objects themselves;
- relations between objects, from the standpoint of the two above-mentioned categories;
- the relation between each object and the subject, and between each object and the subject's drives;
- the relation of each object to the drive, the object and referential difference or differences;
- the impact of the totality of these relations on the instinctual and narcissistic economy of the subject and of his original objects, etc.

In addition, this structural organization must be made dialectical and presented in conjunction with two other questions equally essential for defining the subject's symbolization matrix: the question of seduction and the question of castration, two concepts which are considered here more as organizing factors than as infantile fantasies.

**Seduction** (also considered fantasy or historical consequence) refers to the way in which one of the three poles of the triangular matrix tends to be eliminated or "negated" from the intersubjective relations which constitute the triangular matrix, along with the difference or differences associated with the excluded pole.
Castration refers to the limits encountered by the subject in the integration of the totality of matrix constraints, in the integration of the totality of possibilities opened up by the organization of the matrix. At the same time, castration indicates that the subject can only stumble when integrating this "whole" with all its ramifications; the term also refers to the manner in which he stumbles or stumbled, concretely, in the integration of this or that particularity of the whole.

All symbolization of lived experience will meet with and produce difficulties which show themselves in the structure created by the conjunction of the three intrapsychic organizers we have just defined. It is not guaranteed, a priori, that psychoanalytic work will succeed in bringing about such a degree of integration in the subjective appropriation achieved by the analysand. But integration, whatever its extent, indicates a "developmental horizon", its implicit vector, the one which will necessarily be encountered when placing lived experience in historical perspective, either because it already organizes the particularities of past history, or because it is called upon to reorganize this history in the ex post evaluation involved in analytic work.

Psychoanalytic listening is therefore subject to a double constraint. On the one hand, it makes no presumption about what will or must unfold during the association processes of the analysand, and on the other hand, these processes will eventually have to be referred back to the subjective integration matrix. What the psychoanalyst cannot know in advance is the path the subjective interpretation will take during the course of therapy; he knows nothing about past events which might have affected the subject, or about future events which might occur.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF SUBJECTIVE APPROPRIATION

Given that the psychoanalyst wishes to avoid "falsifying" the analysis, making it merely an intellectual process, or a process serving his own narcissistic needs, he must be very aware of the nature of the subjective appropriation work he is undertaking.

This is why the question of "narcissistic seduction" during analysis, and produced by it, is an essential preoccupation in regard to the manner of listening and the examination of counter-transference. This phenomenon is narrowly linked in a dialectical relation with the antecedents of narcissistic seduction which went into the construction of the self in the subject's past. This is another aspect of the work of establishing a historical background, an aspect which leads to the analysis of identifications and of the types of unconscious identifications that have appeared or are likely to appear during treatment. For this reason, the psychoanalyst must pay close attention not only to what the analysand says in the session, but also to what he "does" in, and through the use of, his association process. Being alert to the psychic functioning of the analysand during the session has become a central issue in French psychoanalytic theory and practice; it has even acquired greater importance than the analysis of psychic content per se. Alongside the interpretation of resistances, which remains one of the essential features of psychoanalytic work, there has developed an analysis of the associative
process itself, of the manner in which it is "produced" during the session, of the way in which, as it goes along, it transforms the psychic raw material it attempts to transmit to the analyst, of how it unfolds, creating and opposing that which it wants to encompass. This is where deferred psychic material evoked by the analysand can appear in its present transference - producing function, where deferred action serves to bring this material back into play.

"Open" listening not only records the preconscious and unconscious fantasies of the analysand, it also notes the signs of psychic processes manifest during the session, the way in which these processes renew and reorganize themselves ex post, in the here-and-now of the session. This task acquires greater and greater priority as sensitivity to the role of narcissism develops. The passage from a psychoanalysis centered on "making conscious" to one centered on the subjective appropriation process (Wo es war soll ich verden) is marked precisely by this technical change in emphasis, this additional requirement made on psychoanalytic listening. This is where the taking into account of "economic" factors most clearly reveals its usefulness.

Listening centered on psychic functioning will pay particular attention to the style of interpretation or construction, and to its impact on the analysand's ability to accomplish subjective appropriation.

Once again, although paying attention to the material revealed in and by the interpretation remains important, attention paid to its rhythm, to the dynamics of its formulation, to the economic and even topical aspects of its form, to its "pragmatic" and, especially, interactive aspects acquires increasing priority. The "interplay" paradigm is introduced to complete the dream paradigm. Psychoanalytic work is now required not only to make intelligible certain pressures existing in the unconscious psyche, but also to make these pressures "appropriable" without damage to the symbolic economy of the subject (which, of course, does not mean without suffering, but rather without too much alienating effect on the narcissism of the analyst or of the objects). The leaning of analytic listening toward the analysis of the analysand's psychic processes is necessarily accompanied by a greater complementary emphasis on the process of interpretation itself. The analyst's awareness of the narcissistic aspects of transference is reinforced by greater attention to certain narcissistic and economic aspects of counter - transference, and to the style of their manifestation during the session.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE HERE-AND-NOW

All of this points out that one of the essential characteristics of French psychoanalysis is the central place now accorded to historical evolution and to historical perspective. This characteristic is implicit in the central reference made above to "primal" events, to the question of origins these concepts deal with, and to the idea of infantile libidinal organization that they bring forth. On the psychoanalytic stage, a scene of past history is enacted, which means both that it replays itself and that it attempts to replay itself differently, that it repeats itself and tries to symbolize itself at the same time. That which is transferred to the
The psychoanalytic situation must therefore be heard both as a repetition of the past and its characteristics (an effect of the repetition compulsion) and as a new version of the past, which tends to look for a new outcome, a new intersubjective and intrapsychic resolution (in the name of the pleasure/unpleasure principle). The analyst’s attention will therefore focus as much on the reconstruction of the history thus reactivated as on the new possibilities unfolding in the here-and-now of the session.

To place in historical perspective means to place that which appears at the surface of the psyche in the temporal and historical context particular to its emergence, it means differentiating the present of the ego-subject from certain past states which invade and distort him, it means to free the present and the future from the weight of past relations and events which interfere with clear experiencing, whose recollection greatly inhibits available representations. To place in historical perspective means to give desires, instinctual impulses and affects their proper historical place. On the other hand, if they remain insufficiently symbolized, subjectified and represented in their own time frame, insufficiently contextualized within the relations and conjectures from which they arose, they tend to be transferred, to displace themselves onto present situations in the life of the subject. As Sigmund Freud realized early in his work, "we suffer from recollection". And although today we no longer simply affirm that "to remember is to be cured", we now think, in France, that we can at least work toward a cure by symbolizing that which was not appropriated in the past.

Placing the experience lived and relived in transference into exact historical perspective is, in itself, the first stage of symbolization, since it produces the experience as re-presentation. The detailed reconstruction of historical reality serves, in fact, as the first step toward subjective appropriation, an important and even decisive element in the economy of the analysand’s conviction regarding the analytic work taking place in the session; it is a major form of deferred action. It is one of the signs of the "personalization" work of analysis, and therefore of its resubjectification work. Although the past cannot be changed by recollection and symbolization, although it constitutes a facet of the subject’s historical reality, the reality with which he had to construct himself and was constructed, the resymbolization involved in the transfer of past experiences and of their impact on the present allows the subject to establish a new relation with his history, to achieve a new type of integration of the latter. This is the kind of deferred action psychoanalytic work seeks to accomplish.

For the purposes of subjective integration, it is just as important to identify what is being replayed as it is to allow it to be replayed differently in the here-and-now of the session. Repetition compulsion and the pleasure/unpleasure principle jointly govern the intelligibility of the transference process. Reference to historical reality and reference to its subjective transformations are both equally important in the work of analysis.

The logic of the model which takes historical reference into account demands that the analyst's attention focus on past traumatic events both from the standpoint of their instinctual and their narcissistic aspects. Therefore, these
events are defined based on the excitation overload they produced, as well as on the frustration of ego needs they might have caused. In turn, ego needs are defined as the totality of conditions/preconditions needed in order for the subject to be able to effectively symbolize and appropriate the content of the situation he has, in fact, experienced. Thus, internal and external reality are taken into account simultaneously in the placing-in-historical-perspective process carried out in analysis.

As we can see, what is at stake in the work of placing-in-historical-perspective is closely bound to a theoretical position which prioritizes repetition compulsion (versus the pleasure/unpleasure principle), historical reality (versus fantasy) and the place of the impact made by the object (versus the narcissism of the subject).

**DEFERRED ACTION**

However, this polarity of psychoanalytic work must be placed into a dialectical relation with the other aspect of the interpretation of the process, the one which, on the contrary, is founded on the here-and-now, or rather, on the transformation of historical reality based on present needs of the libidinal economy of the analysand during transference. Past history and historical reference can only occupy a central position if we understand that their emergence during treatment is also subject to both past and present deferred action arising in the transference process.

This is the other aspect of the double constraint we identified earlier. If we accept that past experience and its repetition have intrinsic value, we must also admit the value of the role played by their emergence in the analytic process. *Ex post*, they acquire another meaning based on present transference requirements, on the present instinctual economy of the analysand. This *ex post* phenomenon, which prevents repetition from being merely repetition of the identical, is itself most often the last link in a series of previous transformations, *in a series of other deferments which marked the course of the subject's libidinal history*. Transference is itself a transference of transference, a displacement of certain stakes which have themselves been displaced from their original context. Thus, historical reality is overlaid with fantasy value, its repetition in the context of present transference is subordinated to present instinctual impulses, and its value and transferential meaning must be assessed according to their function and the place they occupy in the here-and-now of the session.

Although we cannot ignore the "reality" value of the analysand's past history, neither can we ignore the importance of questioning the present meaning of this history when it is reactivated *ex post*. Therefore, psychoanalytic listening must bend to this double imperative, and the interpretations made by the analyst must respect this double constraint.

Having established this theoretical framework, we must now illustrate its application in clinical practice. The session described below is an almost word-for-word account taken from the analysis of a woman of about forty-five. The session
took place after about three years of analysis. I will first reproduce it as it was, giving the raw content, and then provide a brief commentary.

THE SESSION

P. (patient) I didn't have time to stop at the bank to take out money to pay... I had several dreams.

DREAMS. - "Her honor, the judge says she has heard that she bothers me. I tell her that it was true in the beginning, but that "bother" is not the right word."

- "I have to buy a German jeep; there is a commercial for the make Lexias, which is really a brand of whiskey."

In fact, I have the impression that I am the one who bothers people. I wonder if I bother you?... I once spoke on the phone to that judge. I asked for Dominique Dublé. In fact, it should be pronounced Dublet. She is a Family Affairs judge. I had seen her name written on her office door. Dominique Dublet de Vacheron...

An all-terrain vehicle... I am thinking of my mother...

When I came in I smelled your cologne, I wonder what brand it is... Lexias, lexicon... "who is that", answer X.

That name, Dominique, reminded me of a Sunday morning, my husband woke me up very tenderly and said, "Good morning, Dominique", I froze and said, "who is that".

Dominique associated with Sunday... dominical, I wonder if I heard right or if I was dreaming? Dominique also came up in the talk of one of my patients. She was talking about a man named Dominique. It turned out later that it was her brother... There was something about his sexual attachment to her. I don't see what all this has to do with me... Lexias, it has an X in it, like the word we use for a former lover... Lexicon, reading about etymological meaning, what they have in common is the letter. I saw the name of the judge in writing, I came to know it through my eyes, not my ears.

Smell is also important to me, I am thinking of my husband's smell enveloping me. I also had a dream which I wrote down after I had had another dream, and when I wrote down the first, the second disappeared. I have a lot of words that come into my mind instead of the dream I forgot, it's what happens with forgetting. Only certain details stay.

DREAM. - "She sees thieves in the house, there are at least three of them, later she recognizes them in a train station and tries to catch them and hold them captive in her arms in a waiting room. At the end of the dream there is a phone call, but she can't hear because of the noise of the ping-pong game her husband is playing, she asks him to stop but he refuses. She is totally enraged."

The thieves, little brothers and sisters?

I am thinking of a case having to do with a child who was stolen. A father stole his children from the mother. Sometimes I hate the parents involved in these cases. Their case is complicated and I'm trying to understand, to bring them together. This attempt at reuniting, in the dream, along with a certain helplessness, is what I feel. I want to clear things up, to put things in order. I am thinking, "Let's stop massacring these children". The dream carries the affects that I feel in my work. The police has more important things to do, it makes me think of these people who
say they will report sexual abuse involving minor children. The police act as if cases involving children are not important, they don't do their job. In my inquest, the law didn't do its job either. The father is a tyrant who exercises his power in an authoritarian and brutal manner...

The part about the phone call, the "ping-pong ball", it's something I say when children are stuck in the middle of their parents' problems. I call it "the ping-pong game" of passing the blame back and forth. Making love is too noisy for children. In a social work inquest, the parents' blaming is always too noisy. It's a good reason to take the children away, it makes me furious, all that noise and blaming, it stops me from hearing anything else.

In my dream, you're the person at the other end of the line. An umbilical telephone line, it turns into my not being able to hear, I don't recognize any sound, or it's the rage.

**R.R.** Any sound made by the couple?
- I find that strange, not where I started out at all, but it's where I end up. Before, when I was trying to remember the dream, there was a word that was stuck in my mind, the word "interlocutor", between two speakers.

**R.R.** Like Dominique inserted herself between you and your husband?
- That makes me think of a song that was popular at the time, "Dominique", "niquer" (to make fun of). Who sang "Dominique, nique, nique?" It was a nun... I told my husband that everyone involved in the inquest gives me a royal pain. It's hard when I try to put it all together. You shouldn't see one side as all good and the other as all bad... I was looking for the word "angel".

**R.R.** On the one hand you have to bring them together, but when you bring them together they prod each-other, and you're furious.
- Stranded. I'm searching for words. Where there should be loving words there is aggressivity... I'm thinking of how an eighteen-year old girl put it, who said that she was choosing her father because on the father's side there was money. The side of the money... The father's side. It's a confusion of places, the parents want to own the child, they buy the child. It's the place she has in her father's talk that irritates and confuses her. When I try to do this work, at least I remember these things. But I know that people will continue in their old patterns, I don't guarantee anything for the future...

There is a detail that came back to me afterwards, in the dream. "Someone gives me three roses", the rose symbolizes the female phallus, the three places of the triangle, three roses together. A phallic symbol dream, a memory of the prolongation of the child's desire.

To be the fairy with the magic word, when I think of a fairy I always picture her hat and her wand. The magic word... I am thinking of the time when your words had a magical effect on me, when I took them away with me at the end of the session. Surprise, the surprise interpretation... Here, the word comes from you... There are good and bad words, there are stories about young girls with objects or animals coming out of their mouths, toads, snakes.

**R.R.** Roses or precious stones, the word is made of silver.
- But silence is golden... I am thinking of something written by a psychoanalyst, a disciple of Saphouan, where he criticizes psychoanalysis, he says, "a snake comes out of his analyst's mouth".

**R.R.** Clever words but no silver.
The session is over and the patient gets up and looks in her purse for money to pay the analyst, stops and says, "I don't have what I'm looking for."

**COMMENTARY**

More than the session itself, which reveals a very particular psychic functioning and an unusual personal history, it is the commentary which most clearly illustrates the work of analysis. My comments will be of two kinds. First, I will have to provide some background for the content of the session in order to place the latter in context. Of course, the session contains implicit references to the previous course of the patient's treatment, and thus to a history I neither can nor wish to reveal. Therefore, I will limit myself to a few essential facts.

Second, I will make clinical remarks and talk about the issues this session brings up in my mind. This will tell the reader the direction of my thinking, how I process this material or how I tend to process it.

**CONTEXT OF THE SESSION**

In brief, this patient's psychic functioning appears to be sufficiently "neurotic" (in a rather obsessional mode). The prior course of the analysis gradually revealed a problem in the convergence of the two parental images and in the articulation of the paternal and maternal imagos into a sufficiently stabilized joint representation of them as a couple (internal representation of the couple). A passing infidelity on the part of her husband has left the patient in a depressive state of distress, a kind of representational breakdown resulting in the inability to re-establish the relation which has thus been damaged and partially destroyed. She has remained generally suspicious of her husband, in spite of his apparent return to fidelity. The issue of the articulation of parental imagos was introduced and worked on, in transference, first through a variation about sight convergence and the organization of two-sided vision, and then through analogy with her work environment: she is in charge of social-work inquests in cases of couples with children involved in divorce proceedings, where the question of custody and visiting rights has to be settled. Therefore, she is immersed in the problems of divorcing couples, in problems of separation of the sexes, and in issues of the place of the child in this separation process, and of the effects of parental discord on children. Often, the sessions are taken up with the discussion of the difficulty she has writing the report of the inquest, to be submitted to the judge, stating her conclusions concerning the parents' ability to raise the children, and defining the rights accorded to each parent. Writing these reports produces inhibitions, inability to meet deadlines, procrastination, etc. It is quite clear in the analysis, and relatively openly confirmed by the analyst, that talking about this aspect of her work is her way of bringing into the analysis her own past and present difficulty concerning the representation of the couple and the father-mother-child triangle.

Her own children have already left the parental home and have been living in couples for some time. Her daughter is about to be married abroad, and the patient is planning to go to her wedding during the upcoming Christmas holidays. Given these circumstances, the patient is again confronted with a newly formed
couple, but from the other side of the generational gap. She finds this an emotionally difficult experience.

Christmas holidays are approaching and this also means separation from the analysis and the analyst, a separation which, in this situation, actually places her in the position of the third person excluded from the sexual couple. The separation thus takes on meaning in relation to the organization of her own representation of the primal scene, and activates especially her Oedipal fantasy and the conflict contained within it.

Her psychic functioning is presented, from various sides, with the same question: that of a subject confronted with the union/dissolution of a sexual couple, with the reuniting/separating of the couple, and thus with the aggressivity she herself harbors. Here, separation and absence are necessarily referred to the fact that the absent object can be present to another object of the same generation. At the level of fantasied images, the patient is confronted to the scene of this couple’s relation, to the totality of affects and instinctual impulses this scene sets in motion for her. She is confronted with testing her ability to represent this scene - the representation of absence - and/or to manage the internal conflict the scene activates, her ability to be alone when faced with the couple thus constituted, and therefore the quality and types of auto-eroticism to which she can resort to face this situation, the ability of her auto-erotic mechanisms to tie together the aggressive elements present in the situation. This is the "context" in which I place the content of the session, the context implicit in the way I listen to the material, the context which "condenses" the previous psychoanalytic work. We can also say that this is the implicit context for the analysand herself, the context she assumes I keep in mind when I listen, the one which "vectors" (unconsciously, of course) her analytic process. At the same time, this representation of the "environment" of the process has no truly constraining quality for me nor, no doubt, for her (she is able to say no to the "desire of the other"), which means that we are ready to follow another associative chain if one presents itself, but which does not mean that this "other" associative chain would have really no relation to the theme already established.

That is all for the background. We will now look at the stages of the session one by one.

STEP BY STEP COMMENTARY

The analysand says right at the start that she did not have time to take out money to pay me. It’s the end of the week and, according to our agreement, she should be paying me that day. I notice that she doesn't mention a conflict: I had a choice between being late and paying you, and being on time and not paying you, and I chose the second - the potential "choice" is not mentioned. And it isn't something forgotten either, and therefore not a sign of repression. These specific details denote a mode of functioning, a transferential movement, in which the subject acts as if things were outside the sphere of influence of her ego. From then on, the ball is in my court, as it were. It is up to me to live with and "digest" the situation in which she has placed me and the conflict she did not assume. Her reference, immediately afterwards, to a dream about a judge whom she bothers
("agacer") is perhaps a preparatory step to the action of the session ("agir"). "She bother me" is an expression with both an active and passive meaning.

The second dream introduces the image of a German four-wheel-traction vehicle, that is, as she says later, an "all-terrain" vehicle. Her mother is of German origin. This vehicle no doubt represents the ideal of an "all-terrain" psychic functioning, without failings or blocks, the one analysis should provide her with, but it also represents a movement "that nothing can stop". In fact, the associative process during the session was "fluid", too fluid, too easy, with no sign of conflict "present". The only remarks, in the first part of the session, which indicate that there is, after all, a "bothersome" problem: it's not the "right" word; and the name of the all-terrain vehicle is, after all, only a brand of whiskey, a type of drug, an illusion. Her method of "treating" conflict is not "right", it "bothers" her.

An error has slipped in, showing that, after all, something is not right, is out of place, something which "slips" from one signifier to the other without finding its "true" place. The pronunciation error: Dublé instead of Dublet, also indicates, in a similar manner, a difference between what is seen and what is heard, or rather pronounced. In French slang, "blé" means money, specifically the money she didn't have time to get. Something "plays" with the words, changing the meaning of things. "Du blé" but no money, like a trick or false promise once again.

The "Dominican" fantasy which came after this has already been mentioned: on a Sunday morning, a child comes into the parents' bed and lies down between the couple, which is thus united for him and by him. In this way, the problem inherent in having to be an onlooker in relation to the sexual, parental couple seeks resolution through the fantasy of a couple gathered around the child, a couple which would be "only" parental, allowing the child to slip away, secure in the knowledge of having united the parents "for" himself. But this fantasy is contradicted, exposed as unattainable, by the sequence about the other woman's name, "heard" from the husband's lips. Dominique recalls the existence of a "brother", witness to the infidelity and perhaps even to the sexuality of the parental couple.

Dream or reality? In any case, the "quiet" Sunday morning fantasy, the "all-terrain" Sunday morning dream, is sexualized, and the patient is again in the position of the one who is excluded from the relation of the couple. The Dominican fantasy is turned upside down, Dominique is also the one who separates what the patient was trying to unite for herself. The intrapsychic scene is thus well established, the potential conflict identified, its odor detected. Even though, as the French say, money has no smell, the absence of money might very well smell of something. "Dominique" represents the little girl in the middle of the couple, as well as the rival whose presence denotes the failure of the Sunday gathering. The image suggested by the process seems to be more akin to a Moebius strip than to a compromise formation.

The images evoked have no affect associated with them, and the analysand associates quite freely, as if all this was only words, a mere theoretical lexicon, as if her feelings were not involved. Is it that the initial gesture concerning the money
has cancelled in advance the weight of the words, indicating the refusal of any "castration" or of any price to pay for subjective appropriation?

What she evokes, what is implicit in her words, is at once living within her and held at a distance. It is only presented on condition that it be kept at a distance emotionally. Something like a background "noise" covers over her psychic images and affects, something covers them over in order to defuse them.

PAUSE.

I don't know if it was during the session that I sensed something, if it was at this point in the session that something alerted me to be wary of what I was drawn into. Now, while I write the commentary and, therefore, while I make an effort to follow the content of the session step by step, I am suddenly struck by it. And my awareness is like a background "noise" in my listening.

It is now my turn to question the content of my commentary. Suddenly, I am aware that I am dealing with an all-enveloping analysis, an "all-terrain" analysis, an analysis that collects everything together. It's more than just a question of my specific commitment to a certain concept of psychoanalysis, it is the analysis of "what could be said in France about this material". It is clearly the sign of the significance of this meeting.

I am placed in the position of "the one who brings together and articulates", the spokesman for French psychoanalysis. I have been given, and I have undertaken, the task of presenting a "synthesis" of the particularities, or rather of the specificity of "French" psychoanalysis, which is my own, the one in which I received my training. This, of course, gives rise to strong counter-transference, which I recognize in my commentary. This counter-transference, which entered into play in the particular manner in which I heard, both in the session and in the deferred action of my commentary, the material presented by the analysand, "echoes" something which is also present in the patient's associations. Consequently, I hold myself, or I am held, at a distance.

I also "take on" some measure of her ideal project and, by doing so, cancel all uncertainty and all questions which are sure to arise.

Here, reference to the "primal scene" concept serves to cover up the uncertainties of intelligibility by invoking a structural deferment organizer. The "theoretical construct" masks what is unknown in the patient's history. For example, why does she have and why has she had so much difficulty in forming a tolerable representation of the parental couple united to conceive her? What refers to her own desire and what refers, rather, to the counter-Oedipal situations in which she was placed by her early childhood milieu? What refers to her own impulse in the situations in which she found herself? What particularities of her own relational experience are revealed by this? What was the type of relation in which her parents were united/differentiated?

What is the source of the uncertainty as to dream or reality in the Sunday morning scene? What is the meaning of the opposition between what is seen and
what is heard, and what relation does this have with the role of smell? What specific elements of the patient's past history are hidden behind these sensations? Why do these sensory perceptions interfere with representation, what are the things she cannot re-present, and which are thus taken care of and hidden from view? The patient, in fact, talks about how words come to take the place of the forgotten dream; is it possible that certain perceptions come to take the place of representations, that certain ready-made theoretical formulations replace elements of her reality, as an indication of that which she cannot or could not symbolize, the trace of a collective superego, a societal construct used to replace transitional reflection? Etc...

Something tries to cover up these unknowns; a theory, perceptions, word games try to fill the hollow spaces of that which is missing (money, meaning, past history, questions, etc...) and has to be symbolized. The negativity present tends to be hidden by certain aspects of the associative process itself, or of the commentary about that process.

REVIEW

The following dream illustrates the "bringing together" fantasy (rel. the Dominican fantasy), the possibility of maintaining the link in a situation of absence (the telephone), but also the noise which interferes, which covers over the words and the representation and makes them ineffectual.

This is followed by the theme of stealing, and then the stealing of children. The child can no longer keep his child's place, he is "used" in the parents' conflicts and rivalry, the world is turned upside down, children are "massacred". Is it inverted parental Oedipus, or Oedipal fantasy attempting to escape blame by being caught in the inverted trap of the recalled situation? Who sets the rules, who organizes the chain of association?

The patient's father was a gendarme, and so a military man and member of the police - rel. the police who don't do their job, who leave the children in the middle of ping-pong games between adults - who, based on everything she has said about him, was not someone who would have been guilty of sexual "abuse" with his daughter, although she felt she was his favorite, but who was guilty of misconduct with women other than the patient's mother, who was upset by this. The little girl, now the analysand, tried in vain to console her mother, but was unable to prevent "conjugal scenes".

Does this mean that the flow of the session indicates the point of impact of her own fantasy - being robbed by her father, robbing her analyst -, or does it point to other aspects of past experience related to the historical impact of these scenes? When the parents argue and display their problems in front of her, are they "robbing" her, to some extent, of the "right" to her fantasies?
At this point in the analysis, I cannot decide in which of two possible directions I should go. Both interpretations seem plausible: the one which would refer to the patient's Oedipal fantasy, and the one which would refer to her actual history. There is, however, a "traumatic" element present from the beginning of the session, which warns me to be careful about choosing a fantasy related interpretation.

On the other hand, I can't "put things in order" in the "upside-down" world she portrays, by referring to a particular segment of her history, which is unknown to me. I cannot re-establish a historical order which would recreate the distinction between generations and would replace it in its natural chronological order. However, I also cannot remain unaware of the appeal made to me, both in the form of reference to the police which doesn't do its job, and the phone "call" covered over by the noise of the ping-pong game. In a context where the child is used in the service of the parents' narcissism, I feel it is inappropriate to propose an interpretation of transference which would refer what the patient says directly to me. The Christmas holidays seem too far removed from the manifest content of the session to be a dynamic factor, and the fact that the phone call involved me is of no interest given the context, and makes us lose sight of the question of the couple. The enveloping presence of transference seems sufficiently implicit in the session for me to find it more satisfying to choose an intervention "based on" transference.

Therefore, I opt for an "accompanying" intervention, a more transitional one, whose aim is to bring out the point which seems to me most obvious in light of the psychic reality involved, that which "covers" the phone call. This intervention replaces the analysand in the position of being "covered over" in her psychic functioning by the "noise" of the couple, "seduced" by it, but in order to try to free her from it rather than to lead to the noise she herself was producing in order to cover the "noise" of the couple.

I also propose a representation of the conflict which the patient faces, finding herself trapped between two realities: the necessity to "unite" the couple formed by her parents, in order to consolidate her sense of identity, and the fact that as soon as the "brings together" the two parents, the "prodding" starts ("ça nique"), the situation becomes sexual. In French slang, "niquer" refers to sexual relations, but also means "to be had", to be "fooled". While I wait for further developments, I prefer to stay close to the actual process and to keep each of these possibilities open.

This intervention allows the analysand to present herself as left "stranded", left waiting and left out, excluded from her "brining together" fantasy, waiting for another symbolic place, a less compromising one. She then turns nostalgically toward the image of a destiny-shaping analyst who, thanks to some magic gift, will settle the question of her place. She had been her father's favorite. The element of negative transference related to the disappointment of not seeing the "magic" actualize in analysis begins to appear, but is as yet rather hazy.
Could the magic of analysis consist of a "magic" word which would enable the patient to leave the session, face the coming holidays, separation, the scene of the parents reunited without her, without a sense of absence, with the "gift" of being able to remember, or rather the gift of feeling the other to be present and "all one's own" in an almost tangible manner, thus avoiding the feeling of something missing as well as the psychic effort necessary to live with this. Disappointment comes from not obtaining that which would allow her to "steal" the coming to terms with absence and separation, to confront them without "paying the price", with the "right" words, like those of a good student, or those of a "good" father, words with which one could content oneself, words taking the place of actual psychic realities. This is what my last intervention means to suggest, in its phrasing with no subject, thus referring both to her, who did not bring any money, and to me, who did not receive any and who has therefore been deprived and perhaps fooled by empty words. My phrasing implicitly asks if what we are talking about is actually there, present in our exchange, at the risk of not being heard, of being lost; or if all this can only be said if the thing itself is not actually present and at stake, if the risk is not taken. This is an essential issue at this point in the analysis: the issue of present subjective involvement in the transference.

One last remark, to explain why my commentary about the session contains so little reference to the recurrent question of siblings. This question comes up three times in the analysand's chain of association, and each time I don't know how to see it otherwise than as an effect, an outcome of the couple's sexuality, as a reminder of it. The patient has a brother about whom she spoke quite frequently in previous sessions, a brother whose presence is signaled by a certain jealousy on her part. He is a younger brother whose birth had no doubt been the occasion of historical distress in the infantile and Oedipal life of the patient. But I don't know what specific element keeps him potentially present in the background of the content of the session; he is, therefore, latent, awaiting actual participation in the scene.

This material could be examined based on other premises of listening; I myself could interpret it differently. The interpretation I have just presented is the one operating during the session, the one on which I based my listening, and the way I heard my patient's chain of association.

Is it the case that a "foreign" analyst would process this material differently, not in terms of this or that shade of meaning, based on this or that emphasis, on particular awareness of this or that detail presented in the session - something another analyst of my own psychoanalytic culture might do as well - but in terms of the very matrix which organizes his listening?

This is the question we are here to discuss, the work we have come together to accomplish. I feel that the only way to examine these "cultural" differences and their consequences is by looking at a specific clinical session.

HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC REALITY
A second clinical session, this one more deliberately chosen, might allow us to shed more light on the similarities and differences existing between our various psychoanalytic communities.

Given that my discussion deals with historical reference and the relation between history, past experience and the deferred action which reorganizes it, as well as with structural organizers, this second session focuses on one aspect of the work of historical reconstruction during treatment. Here, this work takes a very different form than it did in the session we have just discussed.

In the session examined above, the patient's infantile history is always present in the background of the associative process. It is present starting with the theoretical representation of the primal scene, which contains a sort of universal history of the infantile universe, which comes to take the place of those aspects of infantile history that are still repressed, "forgotten" or, in any case, unknown to the analysand. This is a stand-in representation which provides a rough and imprecise, and yet generally probable outline of the parameters within which the analysand's conflict will have to acquire meaning.

As I said earlier, "theory" takes the place of the unknown parts of the patient's history; it creates a typical, usual, ordinary representation, the one we would "normally" expect, in the absence of more specific information about the particularities of the patient's past experience. Thus, in the ordering of the counter-transference, theory plays the role of a representation which makes it possible to wait, without taking too great a risk, without being too far off the mark - and yet with all the uncertainty and unanswered questions of which I spoke above, but which have now become tolerable - for the process to eventually reveal its remaining possibilities.

There is no actual urgency, as shown by the interventions I was prompted to make, though they could be criticized or replaced by more pertinent ones. Historical reference, although present, is not indispensable. The session unfolds in a state of suspense concerning whether what is taking place in the here-and-now of the association process refers to such or such a moment of past history or to a specific "event" in the present.

Childhood acquires a sufficiently "traditional" value overall, so there is no need to make specific reference to it, nor to decide in what precise time to locate that which wants to emerge. The content of the primal scene is timeless; it colors the subject's present as well as the present reactivation of a previous period in its formation. Symbolization seeks to make known certain of these conditions of possibility, conditions which survive over time, even though they are not equally well put to profit at all stages of their development. We are dealing with a time marked by the effects of deferred action: the problem has already manifested itself in the past, it occurred several times, it has had several psychic inscriptions. A child must resolve the question of his subjective situation in relation to the couple formed by his parents; he must be able to locate himself and define his subjective position in relation to them. This question, although particularly crucial at a specific moment in the child's history, is a structural issue which governs the
representation of his sexual identity. This is what makes it a timeless question, one which persists throughout the history, even if the particularities of its structuring have a history of their own within that of the subject. The emergence of this theme in the session implicitly contains this history, as well as that of the identity representation it carries. This theme is activated by a discrepancy between the way events originally occurred and events as they are in the session, at the present time.

In the following clinical sequence, the discrepancy is reduced to its simplest expression. Everything seems to be happening as if the present is taken over by a sort of traumatic "reminding" past, with no possibility for the analysand to shape it into a representation of the past.

The analysand is a 37 year-old woman, obese, homosexual, intelligent and astute, in a state of generalized malaise having to do, in part, with her weight and physical appearance, and in part with the impression that her life is at the mercy of the whims of her mistresses and lovers, with whom she entertains relations of a passionate, stormy and sometimes violent nature. When she became my patient, she had already had a first experience with analysis, having been the patient of a woman therapist; she had stopped therapy in circumstances which were not clearly explained. She is obviously afraid to enter into the psychoanalytic relation, although her desire to change is undeniable. It was only later, in the course of analysis, that I understood, little by little, the extent of her confusion and the depth of her narcissistic/identity-related problem.

During the first years of analysis, she alternated between the upheavals of her present love/passion relations and periods when she tried, without, however, making real connections with the present, to relate her story and the many incidents and traumatic events which left their mark on it, especially since early adolescence. At loose ends from the start of this period, and behind her parents' back, hiding especially from her father whom she described as rigid, tyrannical and possessive, she went from one sleazy encounter to another, often with older men, in an atmosphere of sado-masochistic seduction bordering on rape, involving drug use sometimes to the point of addiction, and always in circumstances which were a mixture of innocence and perversity. She often had several affairs at the same time, with no stable emotional commitment; when she talked about her affairs in the session, it was always difficult to distinguish her own active involvement from what was done to her by others. Often, she placed herself in physical danger, letting others "abuse" her physically and emotionally.

Taken away by one of her mistresses, she left her parents' home at 18, in violent conflict with her father whom she would never see alive again. He died of cancer a year later, "killed" by his daughter's leaving and her lifestyle, according to the mother, who would not live much longer herself. Between her father's death and that of her mother, the patient entered into a relationship with a married man and conceived his child. This was to be her last affair with a man, after which her homosexual choice became exclusive. After her father's death she gained an enormous amount of weight, which she blamed on hormonal imbalance. Her mother died a few months before the birth of her baby.
These traces of personal history were revealed in our sessions bit by bit; they were confused and it was hard to place them in chronological order. The fact that certain events took place during the same time period only became apparent in retrospect and often because I cross-checked bits of information. I sometimes had the impression of dealing with several different lives which had little connection between them. I was to learn very little about her early childhood, and this only by chance, in the process of association; for a long time, she said that she herself remembered nothing but a few ordinary scenes. But this amnesia gradually lifted to some extent in the course of the analysis. However, she recalled two early separations, the first at the age of one and the second at age three, as a result of illness. She did not have "direct" memories of these separations, and did not know what illness caused them, but it seems that each one lasted over a month. These childhood memories are often bathed in a certain atmosphere of family secrecy. Before her birth, the family had lived abroad for several years, in relative ease. When they returned to France, the father lost his social standing and, as a result, the family's circumstances became more difficult. But these things were never discussed in the home; the father, who was at times violent, was often immured in silence when it came to these family secrets. Especially those which had to do with his own family history. Apparently, he had left his home quite early, and did not have the same family name as his "parents", who were not, in fact, his parents, but the people who raised him. During analysis, many questions gradually arose but remained, for the most part, unanswered, given the death of the parents and the fact that the patient's older brother, whom she sometimes asked for information, remained very vague and sketchy in his answers. The brother's field of work, by the way, is general information, an area of vagueness par excellence.

In the sessions, the analysand tries to appear "serious", nice, willing to work hard; she speaks softly, in a calm, deliberate voice, as if she was in school. This, of course, contrasts with what she says about her everyday life, which is full of upheaval, passion and sometimes physical violence. During the early part of analysis she frequents those places in Lyon which are reserved for women homosexuals, a marginal milieu where both social and physical relations are violent.

She is clearly afraid to "touch" the psychoanalytic situation, which she does not take hold of, as if terrified of some paternal transference. She seems submissive, deferential, timid; she engages little in transference, tries hard to seem intelligent and cultured in her associations. She often speaks in a formal tone, firmly settled on the sofa, in her place. I see the extent of the difficulty she has really entering into the analysis, taking advantage of the psychoanalytic situation, "using" me and using the sessions for her analysis. This often makes me sense the existence of some great fear, a kind of taboo concerning the relation to paternal figures: she never expresses thoughts related to me directly, and leaves very little possibility of establishing transference onto the analyst or the analysis based on what she does in her life or what she says in the sessions.

Inversely, given the numerous "seductions" she relates, her inability to say no and the extreme fragility I see in her, I am also very careful about my interventions, careful not to come too close, not to try to force the issue: I stay at a
respectable distance, often completely silent, a thing which she finally "dares" to reproach me, very shyly. On the other hand, if I am tempted to make a more interpretative, more "penetrating" intervention, her reaction is to withdraw and to draw away from the material involved. Soon after the start of analysis, she entered into an affair with a possessive, tyrannical and very seductive woman - a relation which has the characteristics of lateral transference. This affair is taking place in parallel with the relation she has with another, no less possessive woman, relation which has lasted several years and which has given her love life a measure of stability. Each of the two women protects the patient from the "hold" of the other, and the two of them (representing the mother and the sister, or perhaps the two parents) protect her from my potential hold. This structure allows her to maintain a position in which she is at the center of the desires of the other two, arousing jealousy on both sides, but all the while as if she was not really involved. She plays a subtle game of hide-and-seek, without ever taking the risk of being found and captured herself. In the session, I sometimes feel that she is aware of this psychic mechanism, and I sense how she conducts this game which, though also alienating for her, she pursues with a characteristic mix of naïvety and perversity. Given all this, I have no chance of dismantling this mechanism, except very rarely, and I feel that a major portion of psychic functioning is blocked. Therefore, I advance with care, waiting for the process to do its work and to make it impossible for her, little by little, to maintain the narcissistic position in which she has taken refuge. Since interpretations based on transference are not possible without "forcing", things will have to be put in motion from the outside.

BREAKDOWN OF THE STRUCTURE AND THE WORK OF RECONSTRUCTION

Following a fairly insignificant incident, the patient's new mistress suddenly ends their affair. At our next meeting, the patient is completely "caved in", unable to face what has happened to her, with no thoughts and no energy. She tells me that she has spent two days in bed, unable to do anything but watch videos rented in haste, and that they were very violent movies. She can't sleep and she can't perform the simplest tasks to take care of herself. In the session she is silent, she has great difficulty explaining what took place, she can make no associations, doesn't understand what is happening, can't relate it to anything known. She seems to expect me to pull her out of this state, but without really believing that I can. I myself am a little surprised and taken aback by such a sudden breakdown, since there have been no warning signs in the period just prior to it. And I did not suspect that her relation with this woman had such vital importance for her. On the contrary, she had seemed rather well, too well, protected from the possibility of such a blow. I have no "miracle" interpretation to offer her, but I feel that we have arrived at a crucial moment in her treatment. It was the first time that she was letting me see her in a state of distress, that she was coming to me with a request; it was the first time that she was, in some way, asking for help.

The weeks which followed were very difficult. She could not work, she had put an end to all professional or other activities, she stayed home all day, in front of the television or lying on her bed, unable to think or do anything. But she came to the sessions, exhausted, to complain about the state she was in, but most of all to
blame herself for what had happened, saying she had deserved it because of her complete selfishness. But what was most astonishing was the almost complete cessation of all physical and representational activity, or at least of thought, since she was reporting strange bodily sensations and perceptions about the places she was in, accompanied by intense anxiety and by states resembling depersonalization. She said that sometimes she experienced uncontrollable internal urges, like some form of mental compulsion. Her state in the sessions, what she was able to tell me, what the situation made me feel, impelled me to start talking about hospitalization. Especially since she herself seemed to long for a place where she would be completely taken care of; she herself was beginning to express the need for a place of rest.

To my surprise, since I believed these images to be far from my thoughts then, I made the connection with something she had mentioned one day, briefly, about the early separations in her life.

I had already noticed, but without making the connection with these early separations, that she was especially disturbed by separation and absence. At vacation time, for example, she always managed to be "in control" of the separation, going away before the date we had set, or coming back from her vacation later than I came back from mine, but always with "good" objective reasons. In this way, she was always the one who left. In her love affairs as well, she was always the one who left, taking the initiative as soon as she perceived the slightest danger.

I decided to suggest to her that there was a connection between what she was experiencing now and what she might have felt at the age of one when she was separated from her mother and her familiar surroundings. I then had the impression that what I had just told her established a first "contact" between us. It might even have been the first time that I had the impression that we could establish such a contact. My intervention, however, did not immediately cause any significant change in her clinical condition. Yet she seemed to respond to it by intensifying some of her strange perceptions and sensations. I decided to continue, session by session, the "construction" work I had started, and I tried, on every occasion possible, to connect each sensation and perception she described to its possible "context" - spatial, for instance - in a children's hospital or institution, trying to imagine, at the same time, the perceptions and feelings that a very young child might have had in this situation of separation - distress, violent rage, guilt, despair, feeling of irrevocable loss, of dying, etc. I was trying to link the internal compulsions of which she spoke with the rules and constraints of a hospital milieu: for example, compulsory naps, when she felt an irresistible need to lie down in the early afternoon - etc... In short, I was trying to integrate what she was saying within a contextualized representation, within an "original scene" of separation, within what might have happened during those early hospital stays.

I continued this work for about fifteen days, encouraged by the fact that, although the patient herself did not confirm or deny what I tried to tell her, everything seemed to unfold as if the sensations and perceptions she described "confirmed" my suggestions, as if she could produce other signs to integrate, as if
her relation to what she was experiencing was changing little by little, coming out of the zone of depersonalization, becoming "humanized" and acquiring meaning. At the same time, her clinical state was improving and finally, one Monday, I learned that she had gone back to work that morning. She had "come back". During the session, her psychic activity became, once again, similar to what I was used to. As early as the next session, life seemed to have taken up its "normal" course for her, as if nothing had happened. Only the feeling of greater emotional closeness between us indicated that we had just lived through a particularly crucial event in her psychic life, and that I had not merely imagined all this.

I must say that I expected the process to continue around the exploration of her relation with the maternal imago, and thought that her relation to her mother would come to the foreground of transference. In fact, we found ourselves in a psychic reality quite different than the one we had just left; the paternal figure was once more at the forefront of the process, and another interpretation of the period which just preceded, based on the death of her father and on the mourning of his death, emerged. It seemed now that her father's death, in her adolescence, had already reactivated the traces of the original experience of separation and disappearance, as if adolescence had already been the occasion of a first deferment of the early experience, and a first reorganization of this experience. Separation from her family at 18, followed by the death of her father and mother, seemed to have constituted the first historical deferment of early separation and depression. Between these two periods, she had not left the familial milieu for any considerable time, and had not been confronted with an extended absence which would have tested her ability to re-present such a separation. Separation and death, and disappearance of the object without a trace thus remained linked by association, without any real symbolization. Adolescence and leaving home had therefore taken on the significance of deferred recurrence, of a repetition of the early separation, with the death of the parents substituted for their disappearance in the analysand's representational space. The effort involved in the separation from the family revived the traces of the earlier experience of separation, and of unintegrated historical destructiveness. The patient's recent collapse seemed, therefore, to be an initial attempt to bring into the transference and the analysis all the intertwined traumatic experiences resulting from the initial separation and from its deferred action in adolescence.

What I saw as clearly the most beneficial outcome of this episode, aside from the fact that there had been no break in continuity, was the emergence of an analytic process much more noticeably based on cooperation. The patient was also starting to be able to defend herself against some of life's aggressions, to be less subject to the desires of others. When the lover who had left her so abruptly recontacted her in order to try to resume the relation, contrary to what she would have done in the past, she suggested that they meet to talk, without taking up the previous relation.

What is the usefulness of this clinical sequence for our discussion?

I think that it illustrated and makes explicit a method which places the work of representation and historical reconstruction in the foreground of the
psychoanalytic work of drive integration. It shows how this work of placing in historical perspective can be done by a French psychoanalyst, how that which takes place in the here-and-now of the session or of the patient's life will be referred or will attempt to be referred back to a specific historical context and to specific affective or instinctual circumstances, how it becomes possible to integrate it into a certain representation of personal history. Of course, this is to be done without neglecting the other components of Freudian analysis.

Understanding this type of clinical work presupposes having a certain notion of the historical "traces" left by past experience and of the manner in which these traces are "stored" and can be reactivated at one moment or another of the psychoanalytic process or of life. What is involved is a certain concept of psychic reality, a concept explaining that a person's past experience leaves traces which are those of the manner in which the subject was able to live this experience at the time it happened, given the level of development of his psychic apparatus at that time, his ability to make sense of what was happening to him at that time, and the level of development of his impulses at that time. This concept goes hand in hand with a certain representation of the subsequent deferred reorganization that these traces of past experience will be subjected to throughout the person's history, depending on libidinal reorganization at any specific moment.

In the clinical sequence I just presented, we can see that the initial experience was preserved largely in the raw and that the patient avoided, as much as possible, having it reactivated by life circumstances. This is evident in that the experience has kept its traumatic character given that a large number of its elements had not been symbolized at the time the experience occurred, nor at some later time. The primary destructiveness which the experience must have mobilized at the time could not be integrated since it constituted too great a disorganizing factor for the then existing ego, and could not be used in its development. Its remaining fixed or frozen, as it were, must even have contributed to block the integration of forms of aggressivity or of sadistic and aggressive instinctual components in later development.

Although the patient has a certain knowledge of the initial experience - second-hand knowledge, since she was told about it later - and can therefore talk about it in a session, the actual traces of the traumatic experience have been repressed, or more exactly "cut out", and thereby subtracted from the development of her personality and her ego.

Of course, in the case I just presented, the analysand's narcissistic difficulties do not originate solely in this one traumatic experience. But this experience contributes to these difficulties and, moreover, to a whole series of secondary difficulties, because of the defense mechanisms it mobilized at the time of its occurrence and later, through deferred action. We can therefore assume that it also infiltrates the mourning process after the death of the patient's father, although this event occurs 17 years later, just as it possibly infiltrated earlier events of her life which involved abrupt or unexplained separation.
In this case, the patient's age at the time of early separation excludes the possibility for the experience to have been effectively represented or symbolized at the time. It also seems that her family, or her life, did not make it possible for her to give the experience another meaning subsequently, and that, as a result, the experience was preserved more or less unaltered, which explains its disorganizing effect when it is reactivated, whether upon the death of the parents or the present separation. It is also likely that the analytic process has gradually dismantled the earlier defenses she had been able to mobilize to protect herself from the "catastrophic" reoccurrence of the experience or, on the contrary, that analytic work has given her the hope that another outcome might now be possible.

In other cases, the initial experience has already been modified through deferred action prior to the start of analysis, most often in adolescence, when it was integrated into the rest of psychic life for the second time, and contributed, for instance, to the development of a personality trait, or of a particular type of sexual behavior, or to the choice of a life style or, better yet, was partly symbolized again. Analysis can then offer another deferred retake of the initial trace and its subsequent successive reformulations; in these cases, transference will bear the mark of these successive moments of integration or symbolization. The role of analysis will then be to choose between reconstructing the representation and the integration of early experiences on a different basis, or to leave intact the deferment work already accomplished, if its results are satisfactory for the subject.

As I hope I was able to show, the concept of deferred action is central to the theory of analytic practice, to transference and to the understanding of historical reference. This concept presumes that certain traumatic experiences have been preserved in a specific state within the psychic apparatus, and that they can be reshaped either in connection with certain life events or during analysis. This secondary reshaping can be representational when the reactivation of the traces of an early experience or of a traumatic experience took place in historical circumstances where the ego or the particularities of the situation allowed symbolization and a second reintegration of the instinctual and narcissistic elements of the original experience. But this reshaping can also function as nothing more than a "primary" mode of making connections, if the traumatic experience has been activated and has become mixed with present experience, without being symbolized separately. It then serves to reinforce psychic experience without being truly integrated within it; as such, the traumatic experience can influence subsequent experiences associated with it, without, however, lending itself to being appropriated by the subject. The analytic process gradually deconstructs these successive connections so as to eventually allow access to the initial traces and to make it possible for them to acquire meaning in transference or in the subject's present. The work of reconstructing their original context - within the framework of the model I just presented - then begins to make it possible to appropriate them, and provides them with a first, sketchy form of representational connection on which it is then possible to base a process of symbolization.

Experience is not necessarily symbolized at the time when it takes place. It can remain in a state of "waiting to signify", or it can be resymbolized later based
on a subsequent experience. Thus, a sexual seduction experience which might initially have been traumatic can later serve as the source of "innocent" incestuous satisfaction, and can be useful in the present wish economy of the subject. The dialectical relation between historical meaning and the present meaning of the reactivation of past history is the standard against which we measure the effect of the conflict between repetition compulsion and the pleasure - unpleasure principle. In transference, the unfolding of the various aspects of this conflict profoundly affect the work of placing in historical perspective, which is, essentially, the subject of my presentation. I believe that this work, more than any other, is fundamental to the concept of French Freudian psychoanalysis, for which historical and psychic reality are not in opposition but, on the contrary, mutually define each-other.