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Anxiety in fairy tales and the anthropological structures of psychoanalytic theories¹

Introduction

When comparing different psychoanalytical theories, one is struck by the fact that each of them presents a tendency to reduce the field of mental pathology by privileging one well-defined type of anxiety. I conceived the idea of showing this by using fairy tales in order to illustrate the particular type of anxiety on which a psychoanalytical theory is centred. So I have tried to find, for each theory, the fairy tale that illustrates it especially well.

To the best of my knowledge this approach of fairy tales is entirely new. The existing psychoanalytical interpretations of fairy tales all restrict themselves to one single theoretical approach, which claims to contain the key of fairy tale interpretation. In my approach psychoanalytical theories are not used to interpret the fairy tales; on the contrary, the fairy tale is used to illustrate the type of anxiety that is privileged by the theory. In fact one can find a whole series of fairy tales corresponding to a given type of anxiety, but among these fairy tales one especially well-known fairy tale (sometimes two) will be chosen to illustrate the corresponding theory.

When studying the correspondences between psychoanalytical theories and fairy tales, I was indirectly confronted by another problem. Some fairy tales are – structurally speaking – more related than others. For instance, there is more affinity between ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Cat-Skin’ than between ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Tom Thumb’. By this study of the correspondences between psychoanalytical theories and fairy tales, I will approach indirectly the question of the way in which the different psychoanalytical theories relate to the register of the imaginary.

Gilbert Durand’s ‘archetypology’

In his famous work *Les structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire*² (first edition in 1969), Gilbert Durand establishes an isotopic classification of images. He opposes two polarities: the ‘Diurnal Regime’ and the ‘Nocturnal Regime’.

- The ‘Diurnal Regime’ is characterised by its schizomorphic structure. The opposition between good and bad is always very marked. The good fairy for instance personifies the positive role of the maternal imago, whereas the stepmother turns into a wicked witch. This is the very heart of the paranoid world cherished by Melanie Klein. She asserted – in

¹ Translated from the French by Jef Dehing, with the precious help of Claire Bruas and Martin Jaquess.

² ‘The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary’.

Envy and Gratitude – that the anxiety in the paranoid-schizoid position is mainly paranoid, and that the defence mechanisms utilised against this anxiety are chiefly schizoid (chapter III); in fact she should have said that the paranoid defences are of the schizomorphic type. By affirming that they are schizoid, Melanie Klein created a confusion; maybe she wanted to annex Fairbairn's 'schizoid position' into her paranoid-schizoid position. In fact, in Fairbairn's descriptions the anxiety is schizoid, and its origin is earlier than that of the paranoid anxieties, which appear only about the sixth month. The 'Diurnal Regime' of the image too corresponds to a more evolved stage of infantile development than the 'Nocturnal Regime', because it presupposes a more differentiated consciousness. We will see that the oedipal theories all belong to the 'Diurnal Regime' of the image.

- The 'Nocturnal Regime' is characterised by its mercurial nature. The opposition between good and bad is euphemised. Tom Thumb brings his brothers back to the parental home, but he is also the one who conducts them to the ogre's house. He is no longer the courageous hero defying the bad guy with the sword in the hand: the ogre is defeated by guile. He does not hesitate to sacrifice innocents in order to save his brothers, since by changing the night-caps he makes the ogre devour his own children. The ogre's figure however belongs to the 'Diurnal Regime' of the image. This is not the case for the wolf in 'The Wolf and the seven Goats', since the swallowing of the goats is euphemised into an inoffensive sucking: this allows the mother to deliver them by opening the wolf's belly. One can see that the 'Nocturnal Regime' of the image is linked to the stage of sucking and labial swallowing, preceding the biting stage in the infant's development.

We saw that the 'Diurnal Regime' is characterised by its schizomorphic structure. In the 'Nocturnal Regime' Durand distinguishes two different structures, one mystic and the other synthetic.

- The mystic structure is certainly the most primitive; it is founded on a process of euphemistic inversion, tending towards antiphrasis. The goal aimed at is to transmute negative into positive, as if – by a process of double negation – one could change poison into a remedy. This may take rather amusing forms, as for instance in 'Puss-in-Boots', in which the ogre gets eaten by the cat after having transformed himself into a mouse. In this way the catcher is caught; the swallower gets swallowed himself. From a therapeutic point of view, the euphemistic inversion consists in transforming the anxiety of a dangerous regression and a psychotic collapse into a therapeutic initiatic descent. This is Balint's world, in which the art of the therapist should avoid malignant regression, while at the same time adapting the setting to render a benign regression possible. This transforming of a frightening anxiety into a story that can be 'swallowed' and 'digested' by the inner child is also typical of the antiphrastic transformation. We are then in Bion's world: the commensal relation between mother and child, with its predominant digestive component.
- The synthetic structure is characterised by the dialectic dramatisation of the antagonists. Through the cyclic reversals and the dialectic oscillations between the opposite poles, the synthetic structure finds its objective in a harmonisation of the opposites: *coincidentia oppositorum*. From a psychotherapeutic point of view, this is more particularly C.G. Jung's universe, in which the confrontation of the opposite poles must lead the subject on the way of individuation.

In my opinion, Durand's archetypology could be synthesised as follows:

- A tendency towards a differentiation of consciousness, that distinguishes itself more and more from the unconscious as the infant develops (this tendency is intensified by sexual curiosity and the drive to know);
- A tendency towards regression, which presses the child to find again the primitive security of the maternal womb (return to the mother);
- A middle course establishing a dialectic movement between the two opposite tendencies.

To each of these tendencies there is a particular corresponding verbal scheme: *to distinguish* (differentiation), *to confuse* (regression) and *to connect* (dialectics of the antagonists).

Although each tendency is to be found in any psychotherapy, it seems evident to me that the different psychoanalytical theories put a different emphasis on one or another of these tendencies. A patient who is lost in paranoid confusion, who is incapable of distinguishing bad from good objects, is clearly more in need of differentiation than of regression. When, on the other hand, it is necessary to reach a basic fault (Balint) hidden behind a false self's surveillance, it may prove essential to enable regression to take place. In cases of dissociation of the personality, a dialectical therapy of the antagonistic parts may be considered. In transference neuroses, regression will often be limited to the emotion provoked by a good interpretation given at the right moment. In the case of a psychotic transference, in which regression needs to be contained rather than provoked, the dialectics between the progressive and regressive tendencies will sometimes make the creation of a playing space possible.

1. The psychoanalytical theories of the 'Diurnal Regime'

1.1. 'Cat-Skin' and the Oedipus complex.

The popular fairy tale 'Cat-Skin' that inspired Perrault when he composed his version (published in 1691) was so widespread in the 17th century that, according to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, its title was currently used to designate any fairy tale (Soriano 1968, 1977, pp. 117-118)

The importance of 'Cat-Skin' is probably linked to the fact that it expresses – in an imaginary way – the question of the relationship to the law and the incest interdiction. Thanks to Freud, we know the role and the importance of the Oedipus complex in the structuring of the personality. The nuclear and structuring character of the Oedipus complex can be understood as a process “marked by two joint and conflicting movements: on the one hand the desire for a love object, on the other the identification with the parent of the same gender.” (Vergote 1970, p. 77) The entrance stage into the Oedipus complex is easier to detect in the little girl, since it will be marked by a change of the love object, from the mother to the father. The fairy tale expresses this symbolically by the heroine's mother's death, which can be interpreted as an expression of the infant's death wishes towards the oedipal rival. The fact of the king's falling in love with his daughter – in the fairy tale – will be interpreted differently according to the theoretical context in which it is considered. Even if we limit ourselves to a Freudian approach, we can distinguish three types of interpretation: we may privilege the restricted seduction theory, its repression (implying that, in the cure, transference is viewed as an illusion) or the theory of the generalised seduction (Laplanche 1987, p. 104).

1.1.1. The restricted seduction theory

The seduction by the king who wants to marry his daughter may first be considered in the light of the theory adopted by Freud before his letter to Fliess on September 21st, 1897. From this point of view, 'Cat-Skin' must be regarded as the drama of the young woman who becomes hysteric, because she has been the object of an incestuous seduction by the father. This condition – necessary according to the early Freud – was however not sufficient to make a hysteric. According to Freud's theory of 'the aftermath', the trauma operates in two times. The first time is the time of terror (*Schreck*): the subject is confronted with a sexual action, the meaning of which escapes his understanding. The memory becomes traumatising "only because it is re-experienced in a second scene which enters into associative resonance with the first one" (Laplanche 1987, p. 112). When Freud studies hysteric repression in his *Project for a scientific psychology* (1895), he shows that two events, strictly separated in time, are necessary for it to occur. The first seduction by an adult is not supposed to have a sexual significance for the child. The second event would occur during adolescence, when a sexual emotion is possible. But the emotion attributed by the subject to the second event would in reality be provoked by the memory of the first. As a consequence, the ego is in a way taken by surprise, since the defensive mechanisms are turned towards the perceptions (that usually are a source of displeasure), whereas it is the mnemonic trace that, unexpectedly, provokes the unpleasant sexual affect. The ego notices this too late and utilises repression, a pathological defensive mode, in order to get rid of the memory and the unpleasant affects engendered by it. Thus the memory only becomes traumatising afterwards, since it is the second traumatic event that gives a pathogenic value to the first one.

In virtue of this 'aftermath' theory, one could interpret the flight of the heroine covering herself in her donkey's skin as a fall into hysteric neurosis; the father's incestuous desires awaken ancient memories that she experienced in the innocence of childhood, the sexual perverse meaning of which escaped her notice up to then. The unpleasant affects provoked by such trauma are then repressed, which provokes the hysteric neurosis: the heroine oscillates between a tendency to hide and a tendency to make herself seen. The fairy tale expresses this symbolically by the alternating of the heroine's tendency to exhibit herself (with the dresses having the colours of Time, Moon and Sun) and her tendency to hide under her donkey's skin.

1.1.2. *The classical oedipal theory*

In his letter of September 21st, 1897, Freud confides to Fliess his great secret: he does not believe in his *neurotica* anymore. In another letter to Fliess (October 15th, 1895), Freud makes the first reference to the myth of King Oedipus, of which he immediately proclaims the universality. He elaborates his oedipal theory on the model of the boy, probably because his discovery of the Oedipus complex occurs during his auto-analysis, which Freud started a short time after his father's death. In the little girl, the passage from the pre-oedipal to the oedipal stage is easier to trace since the father replaces the mother in the choice of the love object.

'Cat-Skin' ('*Toutes fourrures*' in Grimm's version) is most certainly the fairy tale which makes the clearest reference to the incest taboo and its transgression. When we interpret this fairy tale as a narrative expressing the anxiety about the realisation of unconscious desires, we can understand the little girl's ambivalence: she experiences at the same time the wish and the fear to lose her mother, to surpass her in beauty and to take her place next to the father.

From the viewpoint of the anthropological structures of the imaginary, the oedipal hero is a solar hero, guided by his need to conquer and defeat his rivals. It has to be understood that the oedipal theory occupies a particular place: it is in the first place a structure that we can find in any psychoanalytical theory of the 'Diurnal Regime' of the image. I am referring to the ternary structure that transforms the primary mother-infant relationship into a three terms

relationship: the subject, the object and the mother. In his *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*, Freud states that the first object was an object from the external reality. It was lost when the infant grew capable of producing a representation of his mother as a whole. From that moment on, the drive becomes auto-erotic, finding its satisfaction in a fantasmatic object. This fantasmatic object may be a part-object or a whole object ('imago'). Both part-objects and imagoes are polarised. The part-object is split into a good and a bad object. In the same way, the parental imagoes are split into good and bad parents. The maternal imago, for instance, will be split into a good fairy and a terrible witch. The Oedipus complex thus also becomes a conflict between love and hate, between life and death instincts.

As a consequence, oedipal relationships are marked by the regime of antithesis: the child is divided between its love for the good parent's imagoes and its hate against the bad parent's imagoes. In the 'positive' Oedipus complex, the child's love will be directed towards the parent of the opposite sex, and its hate towards the parent of the same sex. In the 'negative' Oedipus complex, the opposite occurs: hate is directed towards the parent of the opposite sex, whereas love is attached to the parent of the same sex. The child may also oscillate between a positive and a negative form of the Oedipus complex. In order to be able to resolve his oedipal conflicts, the child needs to keep his good internal objects well separated from the bad ones. This separation process, which exaggerates the differences, is at the origin of the regime of antithesis, which Durand called the 'Diurnal Regime' of the image.

1.1.3. The theory of generalised seduction

The oedipal theory is not in fact a psychopathological theory, since the Oedipus complex is universal, and a 'normal' oedipal stage is not pathogenic. Do we have to return to the traumatic theory which Freud abandoned? In fact, the theory of restricted seduction is a particular case, a 'borderline' case in which real incest is committed, and one cannot ascribe all oedipal neuroses to it. Kohut tried to resolve the problem by postulating that "seduction [...] is not connected with the manifest sexual activities of self objects of the adult – even if such behaviour should be included in them – but with the fact that the empathy of the self objects is deformed in a specific way." (Kohut 1991, p. 29) This type of understanding reduces pathology to the narcissistic wounds that provoke disintegration anxiety. Transference neuroses are then confused with narcissistic neuroses. Here we are far from the orthodox Freudian approach, which connects the oedipal neuroses with castration anxiety. On the other hand, Kohut's approach constitutes – paradoxically – a return to the traumatic theory.

If Kohut's self psychology removes us far from the Freudian spirit, Laplanche's generalised seduction theory on the contrary constitutes a return to Freud. A Freud pulled ahead: in it, seduction finds again its place in 'factuality', not anymore as infantile seduction (restricted seduction theory), or as a precocious seduction during the primitive scene, but as an 'originary' seduction: "By the term of originary seduction we qualify that fundamental situation in which the adult proposes to the child both non-verbal and verbal, and even behavioural signifiers, impregnated with unconscious sexual meanings." (Laplanche 1987, p. 125)

Originary seduction does not imply an act, a behaviour or a discourse that are intentionally perverse; seduction may take place from unconscious to unconscious. It is made up of enigmatic signifiers, the traumatic effect of which occurs "by the incapacity of the adults to account for them for themselves." (Laplanche 1987, p. 126) Originary seduction thus operates by means of enigmatic messages, which the child is unable to decode, since their

meaning remained unconscious for the adult. In this way one could say that the child inherits his parents' unresolved psychological problems.

When reading 'Cat-Skin' in the light of the theory of generalised seduction, one could say that this fairy tale expresses the little girl's fears to become a woman, since she unconsciously perceived in her mother certain signs showing that she might suffer severely (die) when seeing her daughter surpassing her in beauty, and in her father indications (also perceived unconsciously) that he has not straightened out the incest interdiction, and that it would be dangerous to awaken his desire. The feminine part, that wants to show itself in a seducing way (that wants to wear the three dresses), is then repressed: the young girl protects herself by hiding under her donkey's skin. In other words, she will hide her femininity and inhibit her sexual development. The fact of seeing her breast develop during adolescence for instance may then be experienced as very traumatic for the girl, who will try to hide her breasts. She will avoid all dresses that reveal her femininity and try to pass unnoticed.

The relation between 'Cat-Skin' and the Oedipus complex forces us in the first place to wonder about the place of incest in mental pathology. Freud's theories before 1897 ascribed too restricted a sense to seduction and incest, whereas his theory of the Oedipus complex tended to deny their role in mental pathology. So incest finds its importance again in mental pathology, but two distinct levels should be distinguished: the level of the Oedipus complex, which has to do with originary fantasies, and the level of factuality, in which incest does not necessarily have to occur in the sense of the restricted theory in order to be traumatising. The level of the infant's oedipal fantasies is not pathological in itself. The trauma occurs on the level of factuality, essentially by the manifestations of the parental unconscious, through enigmatic signifiers. The latter provoke in the infant a sexual excitement "which he cannot control by his understanding", and which he represses, probably "because the parents are involved in it, which accounts for a transformation of the excitement into anxiety." (Laplanche 1987, p. 125) The incest interdiction thus finds its place again in pathology, by means of the repression of sexual incestuous representations provoked by the enigmatic signifiers and the transformation of incestuous libido into anxiety.

The Oedipus complex should not be considered as a theory, but as a universal complex: several psychoanalytical theories have been constructed on it, showing how its development may be disturbed by anxiety. Therefore, the theory of generalised seduction is an oedipal theory among other ones, but it was constructed on a Freudian conception of anxiety (the 'first' theory of the transformation of sexual excitement into anxiety). The other oedipal theories will all have their particular conception of anxiety, more or less close to either way in which Freud defined it in the course of the evolution of his theory. The whole of these oedipal theories thus constitutes the psychoanalytical theories of the 'Diurnal Regime' of the image, the structure of which is isomorphic (or heroic: the good hero fighting Evil).

1.2. *From 'Snow-White' to 'Cinderella': Melanie Klein's paranoid and depressive positions*

The heroine's mother's death in fairy tales frequently entails the theme of the stepmother; 'Cat-Skin' constitutes an exception to this general rule. If genital instincts occupy the central place both in 'Cat-Skin' and the classical Oedipus complex, 'Snow-White' and 'Cinderella' plunge us into another world: the world of the archaic Oedipus complex; in which sadistic drives play a paramount role in instinctual development. In 'Snow-White' however the Oedipus complex is still more precocious than in 'Cinderella'. This difference is essential to understand the dividing line between neurosis and psychosis in Kleinian theory. The archaic Oedipus complex in 'Snow-White' is contemporary with the first anal stage, in which the sadistic drive also aims at the destruction of the object. At this stage, the impulse to reject and to expel predominates and precedes the impulse to hold back and to keep, which is characteristic of the second sadistic-anal stage. As a matter of fact, Melanie Klein followed on from Abraham's work: he situated the beginnings of object love at the precise moment of this transition from the first to the second sadistic-anal stage: "On the verge of these two stages of development a decisive reversal occurs in the relationship of the individual to the objectal world. If we take the notion of objectal love in its narrow sense, we could say that it starts precisely at that boundary; indeed, from then on the tendency to the conservation of the object will prevail." (Abraham 1966, tome II, p. 265)

This notion of objectal love is of capital importance in understanding the difference between the world of psychotic anxieties in 'Snow-White' and the world of neurotic anxieties in 'Cinderella'. Although in both fairy tales the destructive instincts are projected onto the maternal imago, in 'Snow-White' object love is not present yet, whereas in 'Cinderella' the love for the good mother, as well as the grief caused by her loss and the notion of reparation are essential. In Perrault's version Cinderella's deceased mother is not very present, but the good mother is well represented by the Fairy Godmother. In 'Snow-White' there is no good mother whatsoever, no notion of the loss of the good object: this is expressed symbolically in the fairy tale by the death of the mother at the moment of the heroine's birth. But the stepmother's hate and the primitive oedipal rivalry are ubiquitous. The stepmother relentlessly wants to eliminate the rival and rob her of her beauty by eating her liver and lungs, by cannibalistic identification. The fear of being poisoned by the stepmother is a psychotic anxiety which is at the centre of paranoid psychotic conditions.

Snow-White fears for her very life, whereas Cinderella has no fear for herself. Cinderella does not even complain about her lot, since her thoughts go to her good mother. When her father asks her what he should bring her as a present, her thoughts immediately go to her mother and her concern to repair the past, by planting a branch on her tomb. She does not ask anything for herself. When she eventually becomes a princess, it is because the love for the good object in her inner world manages to defeat the spiteful and envious tendencies. Although in 'Snow-White' the victory of love on death is present at the end of the narrative, persecution anxieties and the necessity to flee are predominant throughout the tale.

So one can state that paranoid anxiety is dominant in 'Snow-White', whereas depressive anxiety prevails in 'Cinderella'. According to Jean-Michel Petot (1982, p. 199): "Paranoid anxiety and depressive anxiety are but the two dimensions that are always present in any anxious state. Only the quantity may vary. During a long time, Melanie Klein considered the concern for oneself and the concern for the other as two distinct and opposite anxieties; then she discovered that they are but two different aspects of the same anxiety, and that they necessarily accompany each other, even if the proportions may vary." This is the anxiety that, according to Klein, is responsible for the complications in the oedipal development. When

the paranoid anxiety predominates, the subject will fear the talion law: his mother will take revenge for the fantasised attacks against her. If depressive anxiety prevails, this means that the subject became capable of discerning his own responsibility, maybe still in a preconscious way, since he can feel culpability and the need to repair. This catastrophic change, however painful, but nonetheless necessary, is symbolised in 'Snow-White' by the biting of the apple. It is a poison, since it is responsible for the inner death in the form of an intolerable sense of guilt, but it is also a remedy, when the child discovers that love may be stronger than hate, and when he acquires trust in his capacities to repair. In the inner world, reparation also means the possibility of engendering good babies by the union of the inner prince and princess. But the sense of guilt and the wish to repair are more present in 'Cinderella', since in 'Snow-White' the insight, symbolised by the act of biting the apple, occurs only at the end of the story.

If 'Snow-White' illustrates particularly well the paranoid position, and 'Cinderella' the depressive position, both fairy tales also show the role of envy in mental pathology. The stepmother in 'Snow-White' is excessively haughty and envious of the heroine's beauty, to the very point of wanting to kill Snow-White to devour her liver and lungs in order to be the most beautiful. In 'Cinderella', the stepmother's envy is less excessive, since Cinderella's life is never threatened. Here a defence mechanism appears which is often used against envy: devalorisation. Cinderella does not rouse envy but rather pity, since her life is miserable. When envy is projected on the external world, the subject may devalue himself, because of his fear of falling victim to envious attacks; then he will not develop his qualities and take his place in society, but rather withdraw from the world according to the adage: "In order to live happily, let's live in a concealed way"³. This dimension is only partly present in 'Cinderella', because the heroine's fear of the envious attacks of the stepmother and her daughters is less strong than her sadness and her fear of having lost the good maternal imago.

'Snow-White' and the paranoid position

'Snow-White' well illustrates the origin of the oedipal conflict, in which the oedipal instinct "is diverted precociously from its goal by sadism", to enter "very early in the sphere of aggressive drives." (Petot 1979, p. 241) If sadism (oral and anal) is excessive, envy will be so important that it will hamper oedipal development. The fact that Snow-White has to flee to stay with the dwarfs shows that she is forced to take refuge in the world of innocence and narcissistic omnipotence in order to escape from the hell of paranoid anxieties. This will last until the day on which she can accept to bite into the apple: this will put an end to this illusory paradise, and allow her to be reborn and to 'grow'. The prince symbolises the appearance of the genital instincts, that will gradually – in the course of normal development – gain the upper hand on the sadistic drives.

'Cinderella' and the depressive position

Her mother's death represents a real catastrophe for Cinderella. In the oral version of the fairy tale, collected by the brothers Grimm, Cinderella goes three times a day to her mother's grave. When her father gives her the hazel twig, she will plant it on her mother's tomb, and her tears will transform this twig into a magic tree that will grant her wishes. The fairy tale emphasises the importance of depressive reparation (not to be confused with manic reparation) for psychic development, since the growth of the tree symbolises the process by which the inner world is generated by the internalisation of the good object. Melanie Klein

³ In French: '*Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés.*'

insisted on the fact that this process of internalisation of a whole object is characterised by “two series of anxieties”: “When I first introduced the concept of the depressive position, I put forward the suggestion that the introjection of the whole object gives rise to concern and sorrow lest that object should be destroyed (by the ‘bad’ objects and the id), and that these distressed feelings and fears, in addition to the paranoid set of fears and defences, constitute the depressive position. There are thus two sets of fears, feelings and defences, which, however varied in themselves and however intimately linked together, can, in my view, for purposes of theoretical clarity, be isolated from each other. The first set of feelings and phantasies are the persecutory ones, characterised by the fears relating to the destruction of the ego by internal persecutors. [...] The second set of feelings which go to make up the depressive position I formerly described without suggesting a term for them. I now propose to use for these feelings of sorrow and concern for the loved object, the fears of losing them and the longing to regain them, a simple word derived from everyday language – namely the ‘pining’ for the loved object. In short – persecution (by ‘bad’ objects) and the characteristic defences against it, on the one hand, and pining for the loved (‘good’) object, on the other, constitute the depressive position.” (Klein 1940, p. 348)

As a consequence, the depressive position is not only characterised by the ‘pining’ for the lost object, which is particularly emphasised in the oral version of ‘Cinderella’, but also by feelings of persecution which, in the fairy tale, appear in the form of the bad treatments inflicted on the heroine by the stepmother and her daughters. During the first months the infant is not conscious of the mother as a whole object; there are only part objects. The prototype of the part object in Klein’s work is the maternal breast, which can be experienced either as ‘good’ when it soothes the baby, or as ‘bad’ when it frustrates the infant. As long as the child does not have a consciousness of his mother as a person who is separated from himself, he will experience the good and the bad object as two distinct objects. The baby’s love will be directed at the good object, whereas the hate will concentrate on the bad object: the baby will try to destroy it by all the means offered by his sadism, which at that stage is chiefly cannibalistic. When the child realises that the good and the bad mother are but one single person, he experiences this as a catastrophic change. The image he used to have of an exclusively good mother vanishes, and deep down within himself he will feel a pining. On the one hand, he is frightened by the idea that his mother will take revenge for his (imaginary) destructive attacks against her (paranoid anxiety), on the other hand he also fears the possibility that he destroyed the good mother, and this makes him feel desperate (depressive anxiety)..

In the oral version of ‘Cinderella’, two characteristic defence mechanisms of the depressive position are highlighted: the identification with the mother and the reparation. In fact, one must consider a certain gradation in these defence mechanisms that all find their place in the process by which the good object is interiorised. *Splitting* comes first; its role in the depressive position is to install ambivalence. The *reparation* mechanism comes second, at first in its manic form: the illusion of omnipotent control allows the infant to resuscitate the destroyed object in a magical way. Later reparation will take an obsessive form, when depressive anxiety forces the child to repeat the reparations in a compulsive way. Cinderella goes to her mother’s tomb three times a day, in order to pray: this may indicate that her reparation is still marked by this compulsive character. In fact, things could not possibly be different, since, as Petot (1982, p. 32) notes: “Therefore, it is not exaggerated to say that a truly ‘depressive’ reparation is impossible during the period in which the infantile depressive position prevails; only omnipotent or compulsive forms of reparation can occur. The genuinely depressive reparation is in fact a post-depressive mechanism.”

The quality of the reparation depends closely on another defence mechanism that is characteristic of the depressive position: *the identification with the good object*. At the origin, during the cannibalistic oral stage, this identification is tantamount to the incorporation of the good object. If the good object is envied, the introjection will be destructive, as it is the case in ‘Snow-White’. Envy is less excessive in ‘Cinderella’: the love towards the good mother and the fear of losing her are stronger than the hate. The concern about the damage or the destruction inflicted to the good mother by incorporating her leads to an empathic identification and to the need to restore the good object inside oneself. The interaction of identification and reparation thus leads to a successful introjection during the process of internalisation of the good object. Whereas greedy and envious introjection leads to the fear of being poisoned by the bad object, successful introjection allows the installation of the loved object inside the subject, which will reinforce his trust in his capacity to repair.

1.3. ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and the ‘forclusion’ (Lacan) of the name of the father

The psychoanalytical interpretation of the wolf figure in fairy tales is not independent from the paradigm characterising a given psychoanalytical theory. In his analysis of the Wolf Man, Freud links the wolves to the primitive scene: the wolves represent the parents having sexual intercourse. The wolf who eats Little Red Riding Hood could then be compared to the incestuous father in ‘Cat-Skin’, but seen here on a more primitive stage of oral love. In the Kleinian paradigm, the wolf symbolises in the first place the primary fear of being devoured; it may be connected with the anxieties engendered by the cannibalistic drives of the paranoid position (Snow-White who has to flee to the land of the Dwarfs in order to escape from being devoured by the envious stepmother). Such interpretations, valid enough if one only wants to understand the wolf’s symbolism, are too reductive when one tries to apply them to ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, since they do not take into account the elements that make it specific. The beginning of a fairy tale is always very important, because it exposes the nature of the problem. Now what do we see?

- a. The heroine is described as “a little girl from the Village, the most beautiful one ever seen”. In other words, we have to do with a scrumptious little girl, ‘so charming that one could eat her’;
- b. “Her mother was crazy about her, and her grandmother still crazier.” The beginning of the tale thus shows that we are in the presence of a matriarchal structure, in which there is no room for a paternal authority. The power (the *phallus*) is retained by the grandmother, that is, by the mother’s mother;
- c. “This woman had a little red hood made for her, that looked so good on her, that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.” The heroine lost her name and became in a sense her grandmother’s little red riding hood;
- d. “One day her mother, having baked some biscuits, says to her: ‘Go and see how your grandmother is doing, because I was told that she was ill; bring her a biscuit and this little pot of butter.’” The fairy tale not only stresses the importance of food in this matriarchate, but, by saying that the grandmother is ill, it also points to the nature of the problem. One could translate this by saying that the fairy tale will reveal the danger of an authority retained by the grandmother (which is more frequent in rural villages). So, if this fairy tale by Perrault has an unhappy ending, it is not – as the great folklorist Paul Delarue thought – in order to “warn the children against the danger of solitary walks in the

woods” (quoted by Soriano 1968, p. 151), but because the fairy tale refers, in its own way, to another danger: that of psychosis.

What is wrong with a mother (grandmother) loving her little daughter (granddaughter) or admiring her beauty? We are told that such love is necessary for the child, in order to achieve the ability to enjoy her image in the mirror. How could the child possibly experience this jubilation when recognising her reflection in the mirror, if she could not read the love in her mother’s (or her substitute’s) eyes when she looked at her? Didn’t Balint emphasise the fundamental importance for the child of this primary unconditional love of the mother, love in which it is bathed, and without which it would disintegrate, just like a fish out of water? If the maternal love is necessary to enable the child to realise her primary identification (mirror stage), Lacan had the merit of stressing the alienating character of such narcissistic identification in a dual relationship. After all, what is wrong with the matriarchal love of the mother (grandmother) for her daughter (granddaughter)? It is the fact that this love bears the stamp of sameness: it does not acknowledge the otherness of the daughter (granddaughter): she is also different from the mother (grandmother). Everything seems to indicate then that the existence of a father – somewhere on the horizon – is totally denied. The child is considered to be a duplicate of the omnipotent grandmother, and this copy is confused with the image the child herself used to have. It is a purely narcissistic love. The child, when confronted with such love, in which there is no room for differences, cannot integrate the distance existing between herself and her double, that is, her own reflection in the mirror. The child remains imprisoned in the dual relationship, since the signifier and the signified are confused, and the access to language and symbolism is lost.

In a family of the matriarchal type, the maternal attitude is characterised by a hypertrophy of the maternal instinct. The fact of having children then becomes a goal in itself for the mother, to the prejudice of her role as a spouse. Anyway, the role of the man is completely devalued in such families; he is reduced to a mere procreation instrument. In other words, in this type of familial structure the object of the mother’s desire is the child: he is the complement to her lack, that is the phallus. As a consequence, the natural desire of the child to be everything to his mother does not meet the Interdiction, since the mother does not recognise the Law of the Father. On the contrary, her own attitude will only reinforce the desire of the child, that can only get alienated from his own desire. Instead of becoming a desiring, autonomous subject, the child identifies himself with the lack, that is the object of his mother’s desire. He remains a prisoner of the dual relationship, the mother-child fusion, and will thus be incapable of taking his place in society.

The fact that the heroine lost her individuality is very subtly stressed in Perrault’s fairy tale: the grandmother “had a little red hood made for her, that looked so good on her, that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.” The heroine became the beautiful object of her grandmother, so much that people do not call her by her name anymore. The ‘hood’ should also be understood in its figurative sense of the ‘duenna’ who chaperons the little girl. Perrault’s fairy tale also shows how the grandmother holds sway over the heroine: the grandmother represents the matriarchal law, which takes the place of the Law of the Father.

In the tale, Little Red Riding Hood is the object of the desire of her mother and grandmother; in this sense she embodies the phallus. As a consequence, the phallus, as a signifier of the castration complex, is excluded. There is no room for the advent of the symbolic register through the Oedipus complex: in the matriarchal system there is no place for a father who pronounces the Law, both by depriving the child of the object of his desire, and by depriving the mother of the phallic object. What is conclusive in this respect is less the presence in the family of a father who issues the Law than the attitude of the mother, who recognises the

paternal function, representing the Law that rules society. Then the child will have access to the order of symbolism and language, to the extent that he can accept the symbolic castration by the father. If on the contrary the mother treats the child as if he were the complement to her own lack, then the exclusion⁴ of the Name of the Father, and the failure of the paternal metaphor, will occur. The way to psychosis is then open, since the reference to castration is precluded.

1.4. *'Bluebeard's closet and the anal claustrum*

As we saw, the matriarchal attitude of the mother who does not recognise the Law of the Father may cause severe disturbances in the infant's psyche, such as obsessive or narcissistic personality disorders, but also and chiefly the most serious psychotic disturbances. Sure enough, if it is not good to want children to behave as adults precociously, it is similarly wrong to encourage their tendency to remain small, and to settle down in omnipotence or in a return to the maternal womb. It would be naive, however, to believe that psychopathology is merely the resultant of deficiencies in the infant's environment. At the time of his birth, every infant has already his own personality, which most certainly is not as malleable as some would pretend. In other words, I don't think that the new-born infant is a *tabula rasa*, and that the environment determines the whole of what will be his adult personality. A greedy baby, for instance, with an important intolerance to frustration, will have much more trouble in accepting weaning. In the omnipotence of his imaginary world, this child will strongly want to penetrate violently into the maternal body of which he feels unjustly deprived. Instead of patiently constructing the good interior space, he wants to obtain it immediately by appropriating it wrongfully, which will lead to the development of psychopathic tendencies. In *The Claustrum*, Meltzer (1992) demonstrated the relation between the unconscious tendencies to penetrate insidiously into the maternal body and claustrophobic disorders. In my opinion, Perrault's 'Bluebeard' constitutes a good illustration of this claustrum theory.

We may interpret the heroine and her sister Anne as two distinct parts of one single personality; this may elucidate certain implausibilities of the narrative, such as sister Anne's presence in the castle at the moment when Bluebeard gets ready to execute the heroine, or the fact that the heroine and her sister Anne say 'my brothers' instead of 'our brothers'. This would confirm that one part of the personality fell under the fascination of Bluebeard, whereas the other part, represented by the sister Anne, did not yield to the seduction. The marriage of the heroine and Bluebeard may be interpreted as a symbol of perversion. As a matter of fact, as a rule marriage in fairy tales is an achievement symbolising the victory of love over destructiveness, leading to an interior reconciliation that promotes the introjection of the good object. Here on the contrary, marriage is perverted by the fact that the motivation is not love, but the fascination by the riches and the hunger for power that blind the heroine. Bluebeard's castle is a representation of the maternal body with all the riches it contains. Instead of a progressive internalisation that would allow for the creation of a good interior place, the greedy and intrusive side transform this good place into a claustrum.

The intrusive penetration of the maternal body (as representing the good object) may occur – according to Meltzer – on three different levels; consequently he distinguishes three compartments in the claustrum. These three levels are present in the fairy tale 'Bluebeard'.

The first level of intrusion consists in the wish to install oneself in the interior of the mother-head/breast (maternal head/breast), the first quality of which is the richness. The world of people who intrusively entered this first compartment is characterised in the first place by

⁴ Lacan refers to this exclusion as '*forclusion*'.

indolence, grandiosity and omniscience. All these characteristics can be traced in the fairy tale, in the first place by the fascination exerted on the heroine by Bluebeard's riches ("[...] beautiful houses, golden and silver dinnerware, embroidered furniture, and gilded coaches"). The indolence and the superficial character which typify Bluebeard's world are well emphasised by Perrault: "It was all walks, hunting parties, dances and feasts, meals [...]". Grandiosity and omniscience are a part of this seduction exerted by a personage who is ugly, but mighty, who can speak about anything and who impresses ("[...] the young girl started to think that the Master of the house did not have such a blue beard anymore, and that he was quite an honest man").

The second level of intrusion into the maternal body is the genital compartment. Meltzer describes this world as a festival of priapic religion: it is Shrove Tuesday. In this world anything is a pretext for feasting, not only to enjoy oneself, but above all to satiate sexual greed: an orgy! This aspect of the claustrum is only hinted at by Perrault: "People didn't sleep, and the whole night was spent by playing tricks on each other [...]" Bluebeard's admonition to his wife before his leaving could also be heard as an encouragement to debauchery: "He urged her to divert herself during his absence, to invite her good friends and to conduct them to the countryside if she wanted, to enjoy good meals everywhere". With regard to the first compartment, we descended one level already: Meltzer affirms that "the occupants of this space are manifestly more turbulent than those of the head/breast."

The third level of intrusive identification is the imprisonment in the anal claustrum, which is assimilated with the maternal rectum. So here we descend another level, to arrive at the core of sadistic and masochistic perversions. In the fairy tale, his compartment is represented by the closet (at the end of the great gallery of the lower apartment); in it are the bodies of all the women that Bluebeard married, and that he cut the throats of. The interdiction would suggest a choice between absolute obedience or death, imposed by the sadist on his victim: "[...] This interdiction is such, that if you happen to open it, there will be nothing you could not expect from my wrath."

The enfranchisement from the interdiction should be understood in the sense of a liberating initiation: the leaving of the anal claustrum by becoming conscious of the fascination exerted by the sadistic monster on the personality. The brothers who kill the monster at the end of the tale symbolise the victory of the life instincts on the death instincts.

People who are under the power of a sadistic destructive personality are sometimes terrorised by the institution of "an atmosphere of hostage taking". In the fairy tale, one is struck by the utter passivity – both of the heroine and her sister Anne. Instead of taking action, they can only passively wait for assistance. They seem to be afraid of drawing the obvious conclusion, as if this would provoke still greater a catastrophe. One has to have the patience to wait, like sister Anne; in the interior combat that is taking place somewhere in the unconscious, the life instincts may eventually overcome the death instincts, which will allow the person to surmount destructiveness. In spite of the combined efforts of analyst and analysand, 'healing' is only possible with the consent of the gods.

In my opinion, the originality of the claustrum theory lies in the fact that it shows how the intrusion vitiates the Oedipus complex, prevents the introjection of the good object and transform the inner world in a claustrum. The hierarchy of values is thus reversed: the father representing the Law becomes, in the anal claustrum, Hitler equated with the faecal penis, whereas the internal mother, symbol of the good inner space, becomes a concentration camp equated with the maternal rectum. On the most superficial level of the mother head/breast, the inner world is banalised into a materialistic world characterised by the vulgarisation of the concepts: "Generosity becomes 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours', reception

become seduction, reciprocity become collusion, comprehension becomes penetration of secrets, knowledge becomes information, symbolic formation becomes metonymy and art becomes fashion.” (Meltzer 1992, p. 72) But the more the intrusion becomes violent, the more one goes under in the world of perversion and psychopathy, with its various degrees of baseness, up to the bloodthirsty and sadistic murderer, represented by Bluebeard. In my opinion, Meltzer’s claustrom exceeds the investigation of claustrophobic phenomena, which was the author’s first intention. The interest of this theory lies above all on the level of the understanding of phenomena of materialistic banalisation (maternal head/breast), of perversion (genital compartment) and of psychopathy (maternal rectum).

2. The psychoanalytical theories of the ‘Nocturnal Regime’

The theories of the ‘Nocturnal Regime’ of the image are less differentiated than those of the ‘Diurnal Regime’. Here therapy has more to do with art than with technique. Verbal material, so abundant on the oedipal level, is lacking here, so that the analyst is forced to utilise his counter-transference in order to establish communication with the patient. Sometimes language is only a means of protection for the patient, who can only establish communication by preverbal means, such as projective identification, or, when subject and object are not yet sufficiently differentiated, by the use of a still more primitive communication mode: *participation mystique*. This accounts for the fact that the limit between objective and subjective is much vaguer than in the ‘Diurnal Regime’ of the image. How can one determine, for instance, in the analyst’s counter-transference, what is due to projective identification and what to the analyst’s personality? The distance separating the speaker and the listener gets lost in these primitive non-verbal communication modes; this is still more the case when we regress to psychic zones in which subject and object are little differentiated.

In order to establish a bridge between the theories of the ‘Diurnal Regime’ and the ‘Nocturnal Regime’, I will start with Bion’s theory about the alpha function. As a matter of fact, this theory is located at the crossing of the two regimes. It is difficult not to classify this theory apart from the other theories. As a Kleinian, his theory belongs to the ‘Diurnal Regime’. But his use of projective identification (considered by Klein as a defence mechanism only) as a means of communication necessitates a regression to the commensal relation between mother and child. The oscillations occurring between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (‘PS ⇔ D’) indicate that we are in the presence of a dialectical therapy. For all these reasons I consider Bion’s approach as the theory of the ‘Nocturnal regime’ for the paranoid anxieties.

2.1. *The ‘Thousand and One Nights’ and the theory of alpha function*

The book of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ is presented as the means by which Schahrazade succeeds in curing King Schahriar’s illness, by telling him popular fairy tales – for one thousand and one nights. King Schahriar and his brother, King Schahzamân, are described as envious and narcissistic kings. In order to understand the drama related by the introductory tale of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’, it is necessary to refer to a cultural hierarchy. First there is the hierarchy between the two brothers: the tall one, and the best horseman, is King Schahriar, King Schahzamân being called ‘the small one’. Between Allah (the Almighty and the top of the hierarchy) and the kings there are *genn* (jinns or genies, also called the *afarit*,

that is the sly ones). Underneath the king there is the vizier, but also the King's spouse. The slaves constitute the bottom of the ladder, the black slaves on the lowest point. When King Schahzamân is told that his brother ardently wants to see him, he hurries to answer his invitation. In his haste to leave he forgets the jewel destined for his brother, so he goes back to his palace. There he surprises his wife, lying on her couch in an embrace with one of the black slaves. He draws his sword and kills the two protagonists before going to his brother. The narcissistic wound is so excruciating that King Schahzamân cannot rejoice about seeing his brother again; he doesn't even tell him about his misfortune. He lets himself pine away, and when his brother invites him to a hunting party, he declines the invitation and stays at the palace. In this way he descends, looking through a window of the palace, his brother's wife participating in an orgy in the company of twenty female and twenty male slaves; she too is mating with a black slave!

One knows that the spiteful person rejoices about the adversity of the envied person, and it could hardly be accidental that he forgot the present he intended to give to his elder brother. When King Schahriar returns from the hunting, he is surprised by the sudden recovery of his brother, and he urges the latter to tell him the reason. In his turn, he hears the painful truth. After having ascertained that his brother did speak the truth, King Schahriar's reason flies from his head, and he says to his brother Schahzamân: "Let's leave and go to see the state of our destiny on the path of Allah; we should no longer have anything in common with the kingdom as long as we do not find somebody who experienced an equal adventure to ours: otherwise our death would truly be preferable to our life." After having travelled day and night, the two brothers took a rest in the neighbourhood of a well situated in a meadow, near the sea. There they saw a column of black smoke coming out of the sea, rising to the sky and coming in the direction of the meadow. The brothers concealed themselves in a tree; then they saw that the column of smoke transformed itself into a tall jinn, broad-shouldered and broad-chested, carrying a chest on his head. In this chest a young woman is imprisoned; the jinn abducted her on the day of her wedding. He makes her come out of the chest, and falls asleep on her knees. As soon as he is asleep, the young woman orders the two brothers to come down from the tree and to give themselves to her, under the menace that she will wake up the jinn if they don't comply. Then, because of their fear of the jinn, they both do what she ordered them to.

One can already assess how the fairy tale proceeds: it describes a kind of initiation process by which the king is driven little by little to wonder about himself, by becoming consciousness of the painful truth affecting him. In order to show this, the tale operates dialectical reversals, that force the deceived and humiliated king to find himself in the skin of a slave, who has no other choice but to carry out what he is ordered to. The jinn who abducts the young woman on her wedding day, in order to lock her up in a chest, is the reflection of the monstrous misogynous attitude of the king, who is paranoiac and thus incapable of de-centring himself in order to enter into someone else's perspective. Rather than becoming conscious of the problems in his own attitude, he experiences himself as a victim and projects his own lecherousness onto his wife. The journey of the two brothers is supposed to be an initiatic quest, which, however, is cut short from the start: envy transforms the humble attitude of the pilgrim who wants to acquire wisdom by benefiting from the experience, into an attempt at indulging his tendency to rejoice about the misfortune of a mightier person, in order to attenuate the pain of one's own narcissistic wound. Instead of learning from the experience, King Schahriar sinks straightforward into paranoiac madness. Not only does he have his wife beheaded, as well as the male and female slaves, but he also instructs his vizier to bring him a young virginal girl every night: she is robbed of her virginity and killed when the night is over. For three years the king proceeds in this way, thus creating consternation and

commotion in his kingdom: his subjects run away with their remaining daughters. One day the vizier cannot satisfy the murderous insanity of the king except by sacrificing his own daughters, which he refuses to do. But the eldest daughter, Schahrazade, succeeds in convincing her father to give her in marriage to King Schahriar. This is how the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ commence, during which the princess Schahrazade will cure the king of his madness.

I propose the hypothesis that the book of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ is much more than a simple collection of fairy tales, because this book reveals how the narrator elaborates King Schahriar’s paranoia by means of her maternal reverie. In other words, this book secretly contains a therapeutic process that is dissimulated through the diversity of the tales; at the same time it illustrates Bion’s theory of ‘O’.

The first night begins as follows:

“When the King wanted to take her, she started to cry, and the King said to her; ‘What is the matter with you?’ She said: ‘Oh King! I have a little sister and I would like to bid her farewell.’ Then the King sent for the little sister who fell upon Schahrazade’s neck, and eventually nestled down close to the bed.

Then the King rose, and, taking the virgin Schahrazade, robbed her of her virginity. Then they started to chat.

Then Doniazade said to Schahrazade: ‘Allah be with you! Oh my sister, tell us a tale to pass the night!’ And Schahrazade responded: ‘With all my heart and to pay homage due! If, of course, this well-bred King endowed with good manner will allow me.’ When the King heard these words, and since he suffered from insomnia, he didn’t mind listening to Schahrazade’s tale.”

This passage is important, since it sets the scene, that is the situation that will be repeated for thousand and one nights. Schahrazade addresses herself to her little sister, which means that, being initiated, she understands the anxieties of her inner child, and that she is capable of elaborating these fears, and to transform them into a tale, by her capacity for reverie. The King was only interested in women for the satisfaction of his sexual needs, but he is insomniac. This means that his inner child is suffering, and that he needs to find a good mother capable of understanding and soothing it. His misogyny shows that his hate for the bad mother is particularly strong. The misogynous paranoiac projects his own lecherousness onto women, and this stirs up his hatred and contempt for the opposite sex. Schahrazade will cure him by addressing herself – through her little sister – to the King’s inner child; in this way, by the stories she tells, she brings home to him the monster that is hidden within him.

In the first story told by Schahrazade, entitled ‘The Story of the Merchant with the Efrif’, the King’s cruel part is represented by an Efrif who sentences a merchant to death, on the pretext that the merchant killed his son by throwing away the seeds of his dates. The Efrif however grants him a postponement to enable him to bid farewell to his family. Then he returns to the place of his fate, to be killed by the Efrif; there he meets three *sheikhs* (venerable old men) who are on their way to tell the jinn the extraordinary story that happened to them. In exchange they demand that the Efrif grant them one third of the merchant’s blood, a deal which the curious jinn readily accepts.

Both the cruel (‘H’) and the curious (‘K’) side are represented by the Efrif, but by addressing himself to the curious side – nourishing it with stories (function of reverie) the narrator prevents the cruelty from being acted out. The generous and disinterested side (‘L’) is represented here by the three sheikhs who first save the merchant’s life, then congratulate him on his liberation. The persecutor (Efrif) in fact presents himself as a victim, since he accuses

the merchant of having killed his son. We are in the midst of the paranoid position. The depressive position has not been reached yet. This can be seen by the fact that the cruel part is represented by a jinn, an undifferentiated personification with which one cannot identify oneself. The evil is still hidden in the unconscious, which is neither good nor bad. We find, for instance, that he wants to take revenge because he feels himself to be the victim, but he accepts to negotiate and later honors his deal with the sheikhs. Evil is not represented by a human figure with which one can more easily identify, as it is the case, for instance, with the khalif Haroun-Al-Rachid ('The End of Giafar and the Barmakides'), whose destructiveness is motivated by envy and greediness. When the first night comes to an end, the King only postpones his project to kill the heroine, because he wants to hear the continuation of her tale.

The dialectical process (between the part of the personality that experiences itself as a persecuted victim, and the part that feels responsible for the death wishes aimed at the object of his love) gradually evolves during the whole series of tales told in the thousand and one nights. At the end of these oscillations between the paranoid and the depressive positions, the King is able to express his gratitude towards princess Schahrazade: "And, in all honesty I must say that, having listened to you during these thousand and one nights, my soul appears to have profoundly changed: it is joyful and imbued with the bliss of happiness." Then the King is quite impressed when he discovers that Schahrazade secretly gave birth to three children: a firstborn son aged two, and twins aged almost one. The King not only becomes reconciled with the woman; he also sends for his brother, King Schahzamân, who marries Doniazade. The double royal wedding takes place on the condition that King Schahzamân accepts to stay with them in the palace, since the heroine does not want to part from her little sister. This may be a symbol of the reconciliation of the opposites: the child parts and the adult parts don't need to remain dissociated, as was the case when envy was excessive.

From repetition compulsion to growth process

Greek mythology teaches us that Chronos greedily devoured his own children. This is an image of the eternal, non-evolving time of the unconscious: the drives remain prisoners of the repetition compulsion. In the 'Thousand and One Nights' we find this theme in another form: the union of the King with the young virginal girl that is killed at the end of the night. If greediness is so strong that the subject cannot accept the postponement of a need, the inner world cannot be established: the union of the King and the Queen aborts again and again. Bion's theory of the alpha function provides a model that enables us to better understand why the inner world cannot come about in this case.

What I call inner world can be compared to a theatre, in which the characters of the play that will be performed are in fact representations of various parts of the personality of the producer. All the tales of the 'Thousand and One Nights' may be considered as the facets of a personality in the process of elaborating, by its capacity for reverie, the hateful, envious and greedy tendencies towards the opposite sex. The King represents the infantile part that remains omnipotent, since it is not capable of facing the frustration that the needs cannot be satisfied at the very moment of their emergence. In this way, if he needs a woman to satisfy his sexual appetite, he is unable to tolerate that she be an autonomous and independent being, towards whom he might feel dependent himself. In his imaginary world this woman should be like a part of himself, or else be his thing, his slave. The becoming conscious of the fact that this woman possesses something he does not possess, provokes a rage and an envy that are so strong, that he is compelled to devalue her, even to rob her of the very right to exist.

The infant-King may also be compared to the new-born baby, who is not yet capable of coping with the frustration that the breast may be lacking when hunger appears. We know

that the baby has a innate image of an object capable of satisfying his alimentary instincts. If he is presented with the breast at the moment when hunger appears, he will cherish the illusion that this object is a part of himself. If on the contrary the breast does *not* appear, the object will still be present as an innate pre-conception, but it will be experienced as a bad breast, visually present as a breast possessing the necessary qualities, but which, instead of satisfying the need, only increases it. In fact, all the objects on which we are dependent are potentially bad objects, to the extent that they tantalise. The breast that exists in reality is the good object alleviating the need, whereas the bad object does not exist in reality. The neurotic part of the personality is capable of bearing the frustration that we do not in reality possess the objects we are dependent on; it is capable of transforming the absent breast into thoughts. The psychotic part of the personality – the King – can only get rid of these primitive elements that provoke his envy. Bion called these primitive elements *β-elements*.

So the psychotic part of the personality is incapable of distinguishing the mental representation from the thing it designates (*Ding-an-sich*). The bad object (which in its capacity of absent breast does not exist in external reality) is experienced as a real object that is persecuting it, and which it can get rid of only by killing it concretely. The people he is depending on are utilised without any scruples; they are devalued in order not to feel the envy, and then disposed of like a thoroughly squeezed lemon. As a consequence, the human link that might arise between man and woman (the symbolic children) is attacked and destroyed. The psychotic part behaves as a god devouring his own children. It is a world in which there is no evolution at all, since the psychotic part is incapable of deriving the lessons from its errors, and thus to ‘learn from experience’. The other is never met with as a person, but as a part object that is used and disposed of.

The monstrous character of such an attitude completely escapes the attention of the psychotic part of the personality, that lives in a threatening world in which all strokes are permitted in order to ensure the survival of the self. The emergent self is incapable of ensuring its own survival, since it is completely dependent for it on maternal care. If this care is robbed of all human warmth – the real nourishment for the self – the latter will be comparable to a famished baby. Moreover, there will be a confusion between concrete food (the maternal milk) and the affective nourishment supplied by the good mother. This contributes to a reinforcement of greed.

King Schahriar well illustrates this envious attitude, in which the affective relationship between man and woman (the human link) is attacked and destroyed. The satisfaction of the sexual needs of the King then becomes the only utility assigned to the woman, which is greedily utilised (ingestion) before being expelled.

The egocentric child that is hiding behind the misogynous and macho attitude of traditional man is brought to light in the tale by the cruel image of an omnipotent king who passes his nights with a virginal young girl, before killing her the next morning. This cruel part, which does not become attached to the other and only utilises him, is present in anyone. Bion called it the psychotic part of the personality. It is the ungrateful child, that transforms the commensal relation with the mother into a relation of power, in which the weak one is ruthlessly devoured by the stronger one. The paranoid fear of becoming an accomplished victim oneself prevents the psychotic part from calling itself into question. Becoming conscious of being oneself the monster that attacks and destroys the good inner mother would provoke a catastrophic breakdown of the self image. Any oscillation $PS \Leftrightarrow D$ constitutes a small breakdown of the self image, rendered bearable to the extent that the ego also develops its capacity for love towards the good object, and acquires a greater confidence in its capacities for reparation.

At the end of the thousand and one nights King Schahriar shows himself capable of hearing the truth. After having brought his children to the King, Doniazade says to him: “And now, Oh King of time, are you going to decapitate my sister Schahrazade, the mother of your children, and leave these three little kings orphans of their mother: no other woman would be capable of loving and caring for them with the heart of a mother.”

And King Schahriar, between two sobs, said to Doniazade: “Be silent, oh young girl, and stay calm.” Then, after having succeeded in somewhat mastering his emotion, he turns to Schahrazade and said to her: “Oh Schahrazade, by the Lord of pity and mercifulness! You already were in my heart before the coming of our children. Because you succeeded in winning me by the qualities your Creator adorned you with; and I loved you in my spirit, because in you I found a woman pure, pious, chaste, gentle, free of any deception, undamaged in all respects, ingenuous, subtle, eloquent, delicate, smiling and wise. Ah! May Allah bless you and may he bless your father and your mother and your race and your origin!”

Alpha function (‘ α -function ’)

Schahrazade personifies in the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ what Bion called the α -function. The psychotic part of the personality – King Schahriar – is overwhelmed by fears and guilt feelings that prevent him from getting to sleep. The young virginal girls that he has put to death after the wedding night, may represent the β -elements he wants to get rid of. More exactly, he needs a container in which to deposit these β -elements by projective identification. But when this has happened, the young woman has lost her virginity: she has become dangerous herself now, exactly like the vampire’s victim who turns into a vampire in her turn. When the β -elements are projected into an object, the latter will be experienced as a dangerous persecutor and has to be destroyed. There is one exception however to this general rule: that is when the object succeeds in containing these β -elements and in transforming them into α -elements. β -elements are ‘things-in-themselves’; the psyche can only try to get rid of them; α -elements on the contrary can be experienced phenomenologically. They are ‘digestible’ by the psyche, and in a way they constitute the material that is necessary for the construction of the inner world. Without α -elements symbolic reverie would not be possible: the personages of the play would then be experienced as having a concrete existence, since the inner world would not be differentiated from the external world.

The tales of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ constitute a quite astonishing illustration of Bion’s theory of α -function. Unfortunately it is not possible here to give a survey of the richness of the transformation work of the king’s paranoia. I especially want to stress the analogy between these fairy tales and the analytical situation. When read as ordinary fairy tales, they enchant us by the beauty of the narrative, but this is not the essence of their richness. In the analytical situation the analyst has to listen to the patient in the transference, and he has to understand how the patient’s discourse is linked with repetitions from the past in the present situation. In the same way one should read the tales of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ in their connection both with the initial situation and with the living relationship between the king and the narrator. One has constantly to keep in mind too that one is dealing with the elaboration of the king’s paranoia. The pressure exerted on the narrator is comparable to the analyst’s experience in the analysis of psychotic patients; here too, there is the risk of a brutal termination of the therapeutic work, without any possibility of discussing this in the session. The fact that the king is surprised when Schahrazade, in the first night, starts crying when he wants to take her reminds me of the unconsciousness of paranoid personalities, who apparently are unable to realise the suffering they may impose on other people, since they experience themselves as being the victim, whatever the circumstances.

2.2. *The dialectical therapies*

“The mainspring of any dialectics is the idea of totality.” This affirmation by Jean-Paul Sartre may also be applied to the dialectical therapies: they are inseparable from the idea of psychic totality. The basis of the notion of psychic totality is the experience of the fear of not being whole: we may call this fear ‘schizoid anxiety’. In the background of psychic totality we also find the nostalgia of an original unity, which the subject endeavours to reach (return to the mother), but the realisation of which constitutes a kind of squaring of the circle. Tom Thumb for instance, whenever he tries to return to his parental home, from which he has been so brutally expelled, only finds the ogre’s house. In other words, instead of constructing the good inner space, he oscillates between the fear of disintegration and the fear of being devoured. The tale tells us that the ogre is so impatient and greedy that he devours his own children. On the other hand, if greediness prevents the inner world from taking shape, by keeping the subject prisoner of concrete thought, it is also necessary, because the ogre’s appetite keeps him alive. Therefore, the whole art of dialectical therapy lies in the possibility of seizing the ogre’s boots without being devoured by him.

‘Tom Thumb’ or the fear of abandonment

The fear of being abandoned by his parents and getting lost in a dark forest, not succeeding in finding the way back, is a form of anxiety that is present at the beginning of various fairy tales. It appears for instance in another well-known fairy tale, ‘Hansel and Gretel’.

The beginning of ‘Tom Thumb’ is remarkable, because in it Perrault shows his perfect understanding of this gifted little boy. He is the youngest of the family, but also the most intelligent. Nobody takes him seriously, and his parents are incapable of perceiving the chance that nature granted them. They are poor, both psychologically and intellectually. Perrault’s jinn is capable of saying many things in few words:

“They were also grieved by the fact that the youngest was very delicate and would not say a word: they mistook for stupidity what in fact was a sign of his spirit’s goodness. [...] This poor child was the whipping boy of the family, and he was always put in the wrong. Nonetheless he was the smartest and the most deliberate of all his brothers; if he spoke little, he heard much.”

Not only does Tom Thumb not feel loved; he does not feel understood either by his parents, who are unable to recognise his value. On the one hand, the need for love of these children who feel rejected creates a personality that is too sweet and too well-adapted, since they fear a new painful rejection. On the other hand however, these children feel under-estimated and not recognised. Their avidity to succeed one day in demonstrating their real value creates in them a real ogre’s appetite. The contrast between the modesty of the false personality and the appetite for success is well represented by the image of Tom Thumb pulling on the ogre’s boots. The same type of splitting is found in the ‘self-made man’, who can only rely on himself, and who at the same time wants to prove to his parents that he is not stupid. Such men may become real workaholics. In this way they pursue material success, until an interior shock shakes them; at that moment they may become conscious of the void existing in their life. Such a shock may also make them turn to mysticism.

The abandoned children in the forest, wanting to find the way back to their home, get lost, which leads them to the house of the ogre (or the witch’s house). This fact also deserves our attention. The need to return to the mother, to the security of the maternal womb, is present in many psychotic conditions. Children who experienced the fear of abandonment will later on

have a lot of trouble with abandoning their parents. Not only will the separation anxiety may be experienced as intolerable, but also the nostalgia of the primordial security will be so strong, that they will suffer much more pain to get out of the fusion with the paternal world. The power of this need to return springs from the disintegration anxiety, the fear of losing contact with the sphere of emotions and affects, and of erring endlessly in a schizoid labyrinth – like a child lost in the woods.

Tom Thumb having pulled on the seven-league boots also represents the solitude of the great traveller. Divided between the anxiety of disintegrating into nothingness and the fear of closeness, he is incapable of investing in a long-lasting relationship. Those individuals will then invest, not in an object (psychoanalytically speaking), but in a pre-object: movement as a sensori-motor scheme. Balint called this type of functioning ‘philobatism’. These people are excellent mediators; they are able to find arguments that bring the opposing points of view closer to each other, but they will avoid any investment by themselves, since they feel that they choke in an intimate relationship. Closeness frightens them, since it would stimulate both their avidity for love and their fear of abandonment. So they are unable to rely on anyone for a long duration.

In this sense, the tale ‘Hansel and Gretel’ is different, since here the heroes are always two, and they rely on each other. This may actually constitute a pitfall for the future: this may for instance be the case for twins who got used to functioning together. A separation at a later time could be experienced as very difficult; sometimes the feeling of lack is so unbearable that it leads to the construction of relations of dependency, or to an everlasting search for the sister soul in the external world.

In my opinion, both fairy tales have one basic element in common: the trauma of rejection, the fear of abandonment, and the unceasing need for love and recognition which creates greed. The demand is so vast that the subject is afraid of falling into the other. Besides, this demand for love may be experienced on an early oral level, in which being loved is tantamount to being eaten by the other. Tom Thumb’s intense need for love will then reinforce his solitude, since to love would mean to disappear into the other.

Another important element of the fairy tale is Tom Thumb’s small stature. When the child is unable to lean on the other and to recognise his dependence on the adult, and more particularly on the parents, his growth will be hampered. He remains a *puer aeternus*, who does not really take his place in society: he does not accept the social rules and uses cunning to escape any constraint. In the ethical sphere he seems incapable of submitting to a categorical imperative, and he manages to follow his own laws. He mischievously plays with limits, drawing dodges from his box of tricks in order to get away from compromising situations. So Tom Thumb is a mercurial figure (Mercury, the messenger of the gods, was the god of Eloquence, of Trade, and ... of Thieves!).

With Tom Thumb we entered the pre-oedipal world of two-person-psychology. It is characterised by the fact that the unconscious maintains a relation of compensation with consciousness: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Faust and Mephisto, Sancho and Don Quixote, etc. Alfred Adler was the first to study this type of dissociation; among other things he showed how people suffering from an inferiority complex have a need to construct an imaginary world in which they can feel superior. In Jung’s therapeutic position too the notion of complementarity plays an important role. It is important to bear in mind that we are not referring here to a Freudian unconscious generated by repression; on the contrary, we are dealing with a dissociation of the ego (Kohut called this a vertical splitting). Tom Thumb has a false self that is too sweet; it is small, and therefore it takes little room. The ogre is the

complementary shadow; this personage is quite the contrary of Tom Thumb: greedy and gluttonous, and not very smart. This is the part of his personality which he did not integrate into his conscious personality, but which may at any time come to the surface, thus provoking a sudden change into the opposite.

Jung's therapeutic method in the first place consists in letting this complementary side emerge, in considering it attentively, and then to distance oneself from it, so that it can progressively be integrated into the field of consciousness of the patient, thus transforming this field. This is the moment in which the risk of ego inflation arises, since the split-off part, once activated, has the tendency to act out. The therapeutic method precisely urges us to prevent this as much as possible, by maintaining the tension between the opposites, so that the patient arrives at confronting himself with the dissociated parts, to account for them. Its goal is the promotion of the auto-regulation of the transcendent function.

Jung describes the transcendent function as follows: "[...] it represents a function based on real and 'imaginary', or rational and irrational, data, thus bridging the yawning gulf between conscious and unconscious. It is a natural process, a manifestation of the energy that springs from the tension of opposites, and it consists in a series of fantasy-occurrences which appear spontaneously in dreams and visions. The same process can also be observed in the initial stages of certain forms of schizophrenia." (Jung 1917-1942, § 121)

Jung is obviously referring to schizoid patients, whose rational thinking is dissociated from the emotional sphere. The fact of artificially provoking the dissociated part – for instance by amplifying images that emerge in dreams or visions – appears not without danger altogether. As a matter of fact, Jung was extremely cautious not to accept cases of what he called 'latent psychosis'.

But the decompensation may have occurred before the patient's consulting us. Then he may be compared to Tom Thumb, lost in the forest and trying to find landmarks. These patients often are gifted, and they have been severely traumatised during their infancy. Engaged in a successful business career, they decompensate and have a breakdown. Then their existence makes a turn of 180 degrees: they turn away from their business, and even ruin themselves while trying to find the meaning of life in (pseudo-)mysticism. In such cases the therapy must make an appeal to the transcendent function in order to commence the way back from psychosis, in what I referred to as the dialogue between Sancho and Don Quixote.

In the course of a psychotic decompensation fascinating images may emerge: consciousness is abruptly overwhelmed by a strange and alienating world. This provokes a dreadful anxiety, along with the feeling of being in touch with a supreme truth. In fact consciousness falls under the spell of the numinous character of the archetypal representation. The subject may consider this as a mystical experience which threatens to swallow consciousness and to plunge the subject into madness. In order to succeed in finding the way back, it is essential to pull off the ogre's boots, and to give them to Tom Thumb. The ogre represents the greedy part that wants to act out; it is materialised by the unrelenting oscillations between extremes. The ogre even swallows his own children, which means that no evolution is possible as long as he holds the power. Tom Thumb represents the wounded child in the patient, which however he would like to get rid of. But this is the very part that makes the overcoming of the dissociation possible: the splitting was caused by the pain of the rejection. In order to get into contact with this wounded part of the patient, the therapist will need much patience, empathy and tact. Only when the dialogue between the complementary parts is rendered possible, in close connection with the suffering caused by the wound of rejection, will it be possible to really transcend the opposites by the construction of an inner world.

We saw that the oscillations between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position constitute but one particular case of dialectical reversal. Betty Joseph showed that it is the fragility of the self-image, being at the risk of undergoing a narcissistic breakdown, that prevents the ego from bearing the anxiety of guilt. Through the oscillations between persecution anxiety and guilt feelings, Schahrazade tried to render bearable the painful truth which the wounded narcissism of the king was unable to face.

Although the truth regarding oneself is always difficult to swallow, in many cases the problem lies rather in the difficulty to accept the meaninglessness of life, particularly when the child has felt unwanted or not really recognised. The dialogue between the rational part, that is well-adapted to social life, and the wounded self, entrenched in its ivory tower, should render possible the reintegration of the real personality, without falling into the other extreme of an ego having lost contact with reality. Failing that, it will not be possible to arrive at the wounded part; then the therapist will have to create by himself the conditions in which the patient may enter into contact with himself. This is what Balint called the ‘managing of the regression’.

2.3. Therapies by regression

In the oedipal therapies of the ‘Diurnal Regime’, regression is viewed as opposed to the therapeutic progress of the patient, since their goal is to enable the ego to achieve maturity and to blossom in adaptation to society. So therapy by regression is a paradox, typical of the ‘Nocturnal Regime’. What on earth can one expect from this saboteur whose only concern is to find again the security of the maternal womb or to escape from the world and to retreat into his ivory tower? Is it not preferable to sacrifice this part of the personality in order to progress? If we consider the improved adaptation of the individual to society – by a strengthening of the protection offered by the false personality – to be the main goal of the therapy, then the answer would be positive.

But in fact many patients suffer from excessive adaptation; deep down they are profoundly bored, since the living part of the self did not receive a place in the primary environment. In order to enable them to get in touch with themselves, the therapist has to create the necessary conditions in which they may get rid of their false self (Balint). He has to sense – by his empathy – the true personality of the patient, who needs recognition (Kohut). Finally the therapist should create a potential space, thus enabling the establishment of a living relationship with the true self (Winnicott). All these measures go beyond Bion’s ‘maternal reverie’, which of course is necessary to render the anxieties ‘digestible’, but which is insufficient when we are in the presence of what Winnicott called a condition of ‘non-integration’.

‘Puss in Boots’ and the transitional object

The fairy tale begins as follows: “A miller left little to his three children: his Mill, his Donkey and his Cat. [...] The eldest received the Mill, the second the Donkey, and the youngest just got the Cat. He could not comfort himself with this poor portion: ‘My brothers’, he said, ‘will be able to make a living if they work together; but as far as I am concerned, when I will have eaten my cat, and when I will have made muffs of its skin, I will have to starve to death.’”

When we consider this initial situation symbolically, we could say that the youngest son represents the part of the self that is not identified with the father, and that is incapable of coping with life. If the two elder ones, who ‘work together’, represent the well-adapted false

personality, then the youngest one is the real self who did not receive the possibility to develop. Contrary to Tom Thumb, who is very active and who seizes the ogre's boots, the hero of this fairy tale remains completely passive. The real self remained in a state of non-integration: it is an animal stage, since here the boots are worn by the cat. In order to establish the real self in the castle – representing the inner world – an integrative work will be necessary, by means of a therapeutic regression.

If one reads this fairy tale in the logic of the 'Diurnal Regime', one is struck by the profound immorality of the narrative. The cat is a cunning liar who achieves his goals by deceiving the king, and even by forcing others to lie under menace. But is the same cat that defeats the ogre by eating him after the latter transformed himself into a mouse. The swallower becomes the swallowed, which constitutes an euphemising inversion typical of the antiphrastic structure of the 'Nocturnal Regime'; Durand called this the 'process of double negation'. This shows that the tale should be read in the spirit of another logic: the logic of the return to a protective, illusion creating sphere. Then we discover the devouring ogre who is hidden in the unconscious; by confronting him he may be transformed. The hero emerging from the water, dressed in the most beautiful clothes of the king, may be linked with the baby receiving maternal care and holding. But in my opinion, the most convincing element – apart from the managing of a sphere of illusion surrounding the hero – is the mobilisation of the capacity to play, or rather to create a space for playing. We are no longer in a rigid paranoid world, in which white is white and black black. The problem of the schizoid personality is how to give new life to that which is dying. Faust, in order not to die, was forced to sign a pact with the devil. Puss in Boots personifies this diabolical side of the nocturnal hero. He represents the most alive part of the infant's self; this part will have to be integrated into the infant's relation with his mother.

"The normal child enjoys a ruthless relation to his mother, mostly showing in play, and he needs his mother because only she can be expected to tolerate his ruthless relation to her even in play, because this really hurts her and wears her out. Without his play with her he can only hide a ruthless self and give it life in state of dissociation." (Winnicott 1945, p. 154)

This dissociated cruel self appears in the form of the ogre. Winnicott establishes a direct link between non-integration and dissociation. According to him, dissociation occurs when integration is incomplete or partial.

The cat asks his master to make him a pair of boots to go into the undergrowth. The non-integrated self is very fragile, extremely vulnerable, and needs to be protected. In the cure, the therapist should be able to create this protection, so that the patient be enabled to enter into relationship with his real self. The sphere of illusion thus created allows the self to integrate itself in a playful relationship with the therapist. In the fairy tales in which an animal fulfils all the trials, the hero is often depicted as a simpleton. The false self needs to shine, to amaze the other, whereas the real self can only get integrated when it can be this simpleton who plays and enjoys himself, while at the same time feeling unconditionally accepted. It is important that this spontaneous and living side receives the possibility to integrate without the risk of being judged or hurt. For this reason, the therapeutic sessions should be long enough, in order to avoid the brutal cutting off at the end of the session, at a moment in which the patient has taken off his protection and is extremely vulnerable.

In Perrault's version of 'Puss in Boots', at the end of the fairy tale, the marquis of Carabas grants letters of nobility to the cat. In Basil's version (Pentamerone II, 4), this is not the case, since the cat flees from the house of an ungrateful master. When the real self is integrated, the cat is no longer necessary: it only plays the role of a transitional object.

It is important to differentiate Tom Thumb's problem from the problem appearing in 'Puss in Boots'. The fear of abandonment in fact hides another fear, which may be read between the lines. It is very likely that Tom Thumb, who was born into a poor family that had three pairs of twins in a short time, was not a desired child. His birth was an 'accident'. The child feels un-wished for, and this is the reason why he fears to be abandoned. He is afraid of falling asleep and he is eavesdropping at the doors, hoping to discover his parents' projects. Such children are often very smart in life, since they learned very early to care for themselves. Tom Thumb is anything but the simpleton, the dull and clumsy hero. One should not expect patients of the Tom Thumb type to be capable of abandoning themselves to regression. They are too much on their guard, and even at night they often have much difficulty in finding sleep. As a matter of fact, the couch does not suit them either. The construction of the inner world is difficult; therefore they always feel compelled to start projects to give a temporary meaning to their existence.

The hero of 'Puss in Boots' on the contrary is passive and unconcerned. He is afraid of entering into the adult world, because he does not feel well prepared. He missed neither love nor attention, but he couldn't find his niche either, since he is often absent-minded and not very present to the surrounding world. Often this type of personality inherited an unresolved problem in one of the parents. In the tale, one can imagine that the miller, who remained poor at the end of his life, whereas in many fairy tales millers are rich, must have had an adaptation problem himself. The most alive part of himself (the cat) had to remain in a state of non-integration. Like the albatross in Baudelaire's poem, this type of person needs a potential space to take off.

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