

# THE BODY IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FEMININE SUBJECTIVITY. ADOLESCENCE: A CRITICAL PERIOD FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF FEMININE SEXUALITY. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TREATMENT.

## ABSTRACT

*The construction of feminine subjectivity takes place in the postnatal period, during the first two or three first years of life. During this period the parents of the child will implant a sense of gender ego in his/her mind due to the asymmetric position they establish in the intersubjective relationship. This deep conviction of being a boy or a girl is determined by the initiating imprinting that takes place during this time (I will base on Money's gender concept and in the reading Emilce Dio Bleichmar makes of it) Later in the development, during the genital stage, Freud observed a greater repression of the girl's sexuality which he attributed to the transfer of masculine sexuality (clitoral) to the feminine (vaginal). Let's remember his theory of a unique sex and of double orgasm.*

*Nowadays there are enough contributions to be able to reformulate this understanding: the greater feminine repression is confirmed but the causes it is attributed to are completely different (Benjamin, Chodorow, Dio Bleichmar, Gilligan,...): -the girl's fear of damage to her genitals and to the violence associated with being a woman; fear of the consequences of beginning to act her sexuality, together with an uneasiness that comes from a precocious sexualisation of her whole body because of the way men look at her. The girl responds to all these by behaving like "a silly girl" when going from puberty to adolescence, which entails many conflicts that take the girl to make many disconnections. This age is often the beginning of psychological disturbances that may unfold with more or less severity. I will talk about my readings about this stage beginning with the contributions of the authors I have mentioned above.*

*We will see that in the center of this debate there are the prevailing femininity formats in a particular culture, the fact that each girl has to get hold of them, and the psychic procedures she has to follow to build herself as an individual subject with a masculine/feminine identity.*

*At the same time, we will realize how important research is in this field, since it contributes not only to managing the analysis of the women who come to see us with greater empathy way, but also to the fact that with our theoretical and practical contributions we may modify the meanings of femininity and masculinity in order to bring them closer to the promotion of mental health and well-being of the people who come to consult us.*

## PERSONAL PRESENTATION

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With such a wide and ambitious title I wish to pay tribute to the authors of the analytical orbit who are making huge efforts to bring into the analytic building that which it lacks: a fine and precise understanding of the psychological endeavours through which each girl has to travel in order to become a woman.

There are many authors committed to this task in every field of knowledge, but today I want to mention those who have been meaningful for my personal evolution and who have been very nourishing for my professional development, never detached from the personal. I'm going to begin with Simone de Beauvoir<sup>1</sup>, I will continue with Maccoby & Jacklin<sup>2</sup>, Spence & Helmreich<sup>3</sup>, Sandra Bem<sup>4</sup>, Colette Downing<sup>5,6</sup>, Nancy Chodorow<sup>7,8</sup>, Robin Norwood<sup>9</sup>, Susie Orbach<sup>10</sup> & Louise Eichenbaum<sup>11,12</sup>, Jessica Benjamin<sup>13</sup>, Carol Gilligan<sup>14</sup>, and Emilce Dio Bleichmar<sup>15</sup>.

My list took me to Emilce Dio, I dedicate this paper especially to her, and to Teresa Sunyé who provided me with the stimulation I needed to read Dio's work in depth. The rest, as it usually happens, has been a fluid flow, with one thing leading to the other, until the title and contents of this presentation occurred to me. I was in Madrid, in the Elipsis centre, where Dio gives her seminars, which I attend on a monthly basis.

I wish to add something else about her book entitled "Feminine sexuality. From girl to woman" Barcelona. Paidós 1997. In the first place, I thoroughly recommend reading it, this reading is at the base of most of this paper. You will find that she expresses these ideas much better than I. I also want to let you know that her doctoral thesis impressed me a great deal. It's a huge, monumental work, done in Spain with an impressively fine and deep theoretical and technical approach, which consists of deconstructing, through psychoanalysis, the main psychoanalytical proposals that lead to the masculine/feminine symbolic asymmetry.

I am going to begin by stating, in her words, that "the denial of authority to femininity is a fact in all cultures and in all times and it deeply pervades the individual systems of acquisition and reproduction of sexed identity". This statement is, in fact, a double one: it says that in every culture and in all times there has been and there still is a denial of the authority of women, and it informs us that this denial takes place in each human subject. The people who are working as psychological analysts are particularly interested in knowing the ways in which each woman builds a personal identity that includes this denial of authority. We are also interested in the ways in which this contempt of the feminine gets repeated. Above all, to avoid repeating this in our consulting room.

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<sup>1</sup> DE EAUVOIR, S. Le deuxième sexe. Paris: Gallimard 1949

<sup>2</sup> MACCOBY, E. & JACKLIN, C. The psychology of sex differences Stanford: Stanford University Press 1974

<sup>3</sup> SPENCE, J.T. & HELMREICH, R.L. Masculinity & Femininity. Their Psychological Dimensions, Correlates, & Antecedents. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978

<sup>4</sup> BEM, S. (1981) "Gender Schema Theory" *Psychological Review*, 88, 354, 364

<sup>5</sup> DOWLING, C. The Cinderella Complex. New York: Summit Books, 1981

<sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ Perfect Women. New York: Summit Books, 1988

<sup>7</sup> CHODOROW, N. The reproduction of mothering. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978

<sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ Femininities, Masculinities: Sexualities. London: Free Association Books 1994

<sup>9</sup> NORWOOD, R. Women who love too much. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1985

<sup>10</sup> ORBACH, S. Fat is a Feminist Issue. London: Hamlyn Paperbacks, 1978

<sup>11</sup> EICHENBAUM, L. & ORBACH, S. What do women want? London: Fontana/Collins 1983

<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding women Harmondsworth: Penguin 1983

<sup>13</sup> BENJAMIN, J. The bonds of love. London: Virago Press 1990

<sup>14</sup> GILLIGAN, C. In a different voice Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982

<sup>15</sup> DIO BLEICHMAR, E. La sexualidad Femenina de la niña a la mujer. Barcelona: Paidós 1997

First of all I will talk about the concept of the sex-gender system, a system by which each concrete person acquires his/her sexual identity, because I believe it is one of the notions that explain the maintaining of an unequal world and the one that shows how each woman is affected by this. We will see that the sex-gender system is an entity that goes beyond the individual story of the psychological development of each person, to include the cultural. Femininity and masculinity are schemata that preexist the concrete father and mother of the child, as congenital schemata acquired in a phylogenetic way, as precipitates of the history of human culture, that have a universal character and that are sustained throughout the myths and ghosts that make up the symbolic building of the particular culture in which they exist. Thus; two characteristic: one, the autonomous existence of the schema allows us to postulate that gender is one of these schemata that preexists each individual developing child; and two, myths and ghosts of each particular culture are the ones that sustain them. Psychoanalysis contributes to sustaining such myths and ghosts in a way that reinforces the symbolic building of the culture, even though it has the capacity to uncover them and reformulate them.

### Psychoanalysis

I'm talking about psychoanalysis because I understand that it is at the base of bioenergetic analysis and because its myths and ghosts pervade our theory in the same way as I understand that psychoanalysis inspires a great portion of the "psy" culture, and has a good degree of influence in the western contemporary culture. I also talk about psychoanalysis because I bring evidence of what I found in the sense that feminine subjectivity is very different from the way Freud, Lacan and the psychoanalysts who follow them are drawing it. And, since nowadays research in psychoanalysis still ends up referring, in a vicious and closed circle, to Freud's word and to his theories about psychosexual development, it ends up by finding the "base rock", in such a way that the discourse about feminine sexuality ends up being a masculine discourse rather than the experience of women, and this is what we want to modify.

I am going to summarise what Freud<sup>16</sup> says about feminine sexuality (understanding for sexuality sexed identity): for him sexuality is determined by biology. In his first paper, in 1908 "Three essays on the theory of sexuality. Child sexuality" he postulates that the boys have the theory that both sexes have the same genital apparatus. Although he states that the girls don't create a similar theory, he says that what they do is to succumb to penis envy, that culminates with the wish to be a boy. Here he writes his theory about the unique sex. In 1924, in "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex" he states that anatomy is destiny, that the clitoris behaves like a penis, but when she compares hers with a real one she feels this a disadvantage and a reason for inferiority. The girl, then supposes that she lost it through castration, and accepts this fact as consummate. In the Oedipus complex the renunciation of the penis has to have a compensation, the girl turns from the idea of penis to the idea of child, and that it will be a present from her father. In this same text Freud states that his knowledge about the evolutionary process of girls is incomplete and unsatisfactory. In 1925, in "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the sexes" he states that the girl realises that the penis is very visible and of great proportions, and she recognises it as similar to her own little and inconspicuous organ, and since this moment she falls victim of phallic envy.

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<sup>16</sup> FREUD, S. Obras completas Madrid: Editorial Bibioteca Nueva. 4ªedición, 1981. 3667pgs.

In this text Freud talks about clitoral masturbation as masculine, and he realises that girls tend to resort to masturbation less than boys. He attributes it to repression of the masculine sexuality so that her femininity may develop. In this text Freud states literally “the divergence between the feminine and masculine sexual development is an understandable consequence of the anatomical difference between the genitals and of the implicit psychical situation: it is equivalent to the difference between a real castration and a mere threat of castration. In a year Freud goes from “the girl supposes that she lost it through castration” (In the above mentioned text from 1924 “The Dissolution of the Oedipus complex”) to actually believing she has been castrated. He himself believes in the supposition and a year later he talks about a castration being carried out on the girl. From this fact he draws the consequence that the superego of the woman is much weaker than that of the man. In 1931, in “Female Sexuality” he states that the woman has two sexual areas: the vagina, the feminine sexual, and the clitoris, masculine. He also states that from the recognition of castration she passes on to recognise the man’s superiority and her own inferiority, and she rebels against this state of things in three ways:

- 1) withdrawing from sexuality
- 2) self-affirming in masculinity
- 3) adopting the normal feminine attitude

We can find what he understands for normal feminine attitude in “Femininity” (1932) where he equates femininity to passivity, to masochism, to docility and to dependency. He says that with the turn to femininity the clitoris has to totally or partially give up its sensitivity and with it its significance to the vagina. In this text Freud even states that: “the achievement of the biological purpose has been given up to the man’s aggression and somehow made independent of the woman’s consent”. He ends up reaching the conclusion, in 1937, in “Analysis terminable and Interminable” that, for the psychical, biology plays the role of underlying bedrock. Sure enough, the repudiation of femininity cannot be other than a biological fact, an part of the great enigma of sexuality”. He says this in reference to a preceding impression: “often one has the impression of having penetrated all the psychological layers of having arrived, with the wish for the penis and the masculine protest, at the ‘bedrock’”.

I enclose these basic texts of Freud’s psychosexual development because they define, from his point of view, the course of development that every girl has to go through in order to become a feminine woman, and because it is precisely about these concepts that we want to talk: of masculine unique sex, of castration carried out, of the masculine sexuality of the girl, of vaginal anaesthesia and of femininity and sexuality- all of these are matters that have to do with and affect the body of the girl. Because we want to bring in the evidence that we have today about the conceptual mistakes contained in these principles, as well as show the horror produced in us by: a) the subordinate position in which this system places women; and b) the fact that, although these mistakes have been refuted, proven and verified from multiple related approaches, the main psychoanalytic institutions keep repeating them without including the appropriate corrections.

Let us see how Dio formulates it by mentioning Lacan when he realises the “androcentric and ‘patrocentric’ character” of Oedipus. Lacan says: “it permits us to analyse the subjective experience, it shows the woman in a position that is, so to speak, subordinate”, that is to say, what the oedipal construction shows is the subordination of the girl to an androcentric system. We can see how psychoanalysis nowadays reinforces

this subordination when it postulates an intricate series of proposals from which it normalises a model of femininity and masculinity that coincides with the institutions of the symbolic. Model that, as it confuses, superimposes and makes no effort to distinguish between sexuality and identity, between sex and gender, between penis and phallus, not only analyses the subjective experience of the woman as subordinate, but institutes and constitutes her as such.

Let us see how: Can one be a psychoanalyst and not work with the Oedipus theory? That is to say, can one work with a woman patient and not hold that she must give up her masculinoid, feminist, hysterical, archaic and bisexual ficklenesses... all of these equivalent in her unconscious to having a penis through illicit ways, in order to receive a baby, which is her true concern? In order to, in this way, succeed in getting through the Oedipus complex.

Does maternity have anything to do with sexual pleasure? Isn't psychoanalysis contributing to the anaesthesia and frigidity when it imposes a reproductive aim to the sexual desires of a woman? On the other hand, how do we think that the wish for a son or daughter originates and gets structured in men? Shouldn't it call our attention that psychoanalysis hasn't studied this place in masculine subjectivity, and that the father is symbolic, something alien and strange?

#### Gender as a post-natal imprinting

Let us talk about the concept of gender. It was introduced by John Money in 1955,<sup>17</sup> and it wasn't incorporated into psychoanalysis until 1964, when Robert Stoller<sup>18</sup> formulated gender as: "nucleus of identity that gives account of the intimate feeling of knowing oneself as boy or girl". The concept of gender, as we have said, is key to understanding femininity/masculinity as one dimension of the ego instance: identity, the sense of self. The main stream of psychoanalysis hasn't incorporated this notion yet. Neither has Lowen: in his book "Love and Orgasm"<sup>19</sup> he talks about double standard and about sexual role whereas in later writings, like "The fear of life"<sup>20</sup>, although he uses the same myths and ghosts, and he talks about them in terms of gender, he doesn't do this in an explicit and systematic way.

The ego is a representation of the generic self from its origin. This is to say, gender is one of the constitutive attributes of the ego. For the parents the foetus already has sex, and it is the shape of his/her external sexual organs that causes what Money defined as "dimorphism of response in the presence of the sexual characters", so, if he has a penis he will be assigned a cluster of behaviours, and if she has a vagina a different one. This dimorphism –two different shapes- is one of the most universal aspects of the social link". This notion is fundamental since it shows that **human sexuality is cultural**: that it is about a multiply determined and normalised system, which we call sex-gender system and shows that it is gender that shapes and normalises sexuality. This is different from what Freud held, that it was sex. That is, what we call sexual identity is not

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<sup>17</sup> Money, J. (1955) "Hermaphroditism, gender and precocity in hyperadrenocorticism: Psychological findings", *Bull. John Hopkins Hosp.*, 96

<sup>18</sup> Stoller, R. (1964), "A contribution to the study of gender identity", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 45, 220-226

<sup>19</sup> LOWEN, A. Love and orgasm New York: Collier Books 1965

<sup>20</sup> LOWEN, A. The fear of life

determined by biology and anatomy, but rather by the belief the parents had about the sex that belonged to the body they were growing.

Thus, if we take this definition in psychoanalytic terms we find the wish, the ghost, the place, the adult's expectations about this future being; boy or girl. So, we might say that the adult's sexuality preexists and establishes that of the child.

Money indicated that the gender scheme that is codified in the mind, in the brain, via the senses after birth, is as powerful as the scheme that is codified through the foetal hormones in the prenatal period. In postnatal life the gender scheme may become as immutable as a mother tongue. In this sense it is like Lorenz's imprinting. Let us recall the concept: Lorenz worked as an ethologist with ducks. He realised that ducks were born with a genetic pattern of fixed action that makes them follow anything that moves. This is usually the mother. But Lorenz got in between and there was a group of ducklings that followed him. This pattern is imprinting.

In this way Money introduced greater complexity to the phenomenon of sexual identity when he showed that sex is a multifactorial system in which gender is one of the factors that sometimes has such magnitude that it drives the subject to twist his/her anatomical endowment from birth.

Money also pointed out that a concatenation and multiplicity of pre and postnatal factors take part in the determination of the sexual and emotional life of people. He realised that there is not always a sex-gender correspondence. And that this non-correspondence may be due to a variety of factors: one person may have an xy genetic endowment which would determine him as man; a prenatal hormonal alteration that causes an absence of external genitals and she may be educated as girl. What caught his attention was how strong the gender identity was, so much so, that once the mistaken has been acknowledged, it was very difficult to correct, to the point that change might become impossible. This was what led him to formulate the concept of gender and to be perceive the tremendous importance and complexity of this system.

Money captured the modulating power, creator of meaning, of identity, that the early human postnatal experience has over biology. The parents, thorough their ghosts, beliefs and convictions were able to generate an identity contrary to the anatomical one but that had the same or greater power.

What Money calls gender has to do, then, with a face to face relationship system, of the parents and close relatives with the human infant during the first two or three years of life, in which, from this kind of relationships –called intersubjective by the psychoanalysts- the inner feeling of being a boy or a girl is instituted in the psyche.

Gender is psychoanalytic theory since it is constructed from the phantasmatic and the wish of the other, which gets implanted, instituting the ego of the subject. To become a psychic subject the living being must go through a human process that operates like an imprinting which constitutes his/her subjectivity.

Our task as analysts is to explain through which psychic procedures the individual subject builds this feminine/masculine identity. But, if we draw from psychoanalytic principles, we must take into account that these are not only a descriptive theory, but

they rather contain a cluster of propositions that participate in the institution and explanatory meaning of masculinity and femininity.

This fact has its importance, because, for example, psychoanalysis has not yet been able to modify the “invisibility” of women, which brings with it deep consequences. This “invisibility” also takes place in psychoanalysis in a particular way. The classical thesis of Freud is that the girl is an incomplete or modified boy. This means that in psychoanalysis the girl and femininity continue invisibilised, that there is no symbolisation of the woman’s sex as such. In this sense it repeats the historical and collective imaginary representation of the woman as derivative from the man since the world has been human, since it emerged from Adam’s rib, to Hypocrite, Galen, Plato, Aristotle, they all repeat endlessly the theoretical categories of “inferior”, “unfinished”, “imperfect”, “mutilated”,... Let us see how this invisibilisation or negation has taken place.

### Unique genital apparatus

There are documents of the correspondence between Freud and Abraham that enrich the comprehension of what they would both end up publishing. I’m going to try to summarise it. From 1918 on Freud was working to find evidence of the unique sex, it was the time in which Abraham published “Manifestations of the feminine castration complex” (1922), where he said, “there are a lot of psychological phenomena that can be attributed to the feminine castration complex, there are a lot of women who suffer for the fact of having been born as such. Some don’t know the motives, others call forth all sorts of reasons: social disadvantages, educational restrictions, sexual limitations, prohibitions o the exercising of jobs and professions, etcetera. These are rationalisations. Psychoanalyses proves that true underlying motives of this uneasiness are; a) they feel they are in disadvantaged position when faced with the inferiority of their organs; b) many women haven’t gone through the castration complex.

What Dio finds in this correspondence between Freud and Abraham is that their letters turn around whether the girl has an early awareness of her vagina or not. This would stand for a feminine sexuality of her own, to which Freud answered “I know absolutely nothing about this matter”, only to state, a few line below, “the vagina, as we all know is a late acquisition through separation of the sewer”. That is, their opinion is that the girl is aware of her vagina through the sensations she gets via rectal, through defecation, although this opinions are not based upon any direct analysis of girls, but on the account of a father about his 9-year-old daughter.

The fact that the girl has early or late perceptions of her vagina/and that these perceptions be of erotic origin or come from the rectum, are central data for his theory of psychosexual development. They suggest that the girl’s sexuality is feminine, not masculine, contrary to what they held . If Freud had accepted the precocity of the vaginal sensations he would have had to modify all his theory.

At this point it is necessary to make clear that Karen Horney, in 1922, submitted a paper based on clinical data that she had obtained directly from her patients, that was a reply to Freud’s “Some psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes”, that she entitled “The flight from womanhood”, with which she provided the data that is now available unequivocally. She described the importance of the girl’s

early vaginal sensations and of her libidinal desires toward her father, and she pointed out that penis envy is secondary to the fear of the pain her father's penis might cause to her genitals with such a great size. She also stated, in her paper, that the clitoris as well as the vagina belongs to the feminine genital apparatus and that it's not necessary to change the area, as Freud postulated, from clitoral (masculine) sexuality to vaginal (feminine). Finally she said that the women who wish to "fly from womanhood" actually wanted to escape from the social disadvantage of women in a culture of androcentric orientation. What else might we add to Horney's statements seventy-five years later?

These contributions of Horney were not taken in by Freud nor incorporated to his reflections, and in spite of his acknowledged ignorance about feminine sexuality he kept his theory of the unique sex (the masculine), and of the anaesthesia of the vagina.

### Excitability of the vagina

I continue to quote Dio: it was Money and Ehrhardt<sup>21</sup> who, in 1982, stated that the excitability of the vagina is guaranteed by any erotic stimulation, wherever it comes from. Thus, the clitoral orgasm as well as the absence of excitability of the vagina are beliefs and theories that the experimental situations of sexual intercourse dismiss.

### Myth of double orgasm

To summarise, the belief about the feminine double orgasm, clitoral and vaginal, is a kind of mythology that keeps its validity in spite of its inaccuracy, since the area of stimulation is confused with the area of orgasm, that cannot be but vaginal, since it is the unique organ that is able to contract. Whatever the stimuli –touch, audio, visual- that causes the genital arousal, it stimulates the whole genital area.

### Vaginal anaesthesia

Thus, psychoanalysis should revise its vision about the issue of anaesthesia of the vagina and consider it as an effect of repression and the cause of frigidity. And therefore, treat it as a problem. Kinsey<sup>22</sup> in 1953 found out that many women didn't respond to erotic sexual material, but it was Heiman<sup>23</sup> who in 1975 reported that were aroused (they gave a measurable sexual response) but they weren't consciously aware.

### Puberty

In this sense we have to talk about a specifically feminine repression during puberty especially linked to gender, in which the girl feels forced to repress any expression and readiness to sexual intercourse, and not only this, but, as Carol Gilligan<sup>24</sup> shows, to repress a great deal of her intellectual brightness to favour a more "adapted" femininity.

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<sup>21</sup> MONEY J, EHRHARDT, A. Desarrollo de la sexualidad humana Madrid: Morata, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> KINSEY, A. i cols. Sexual behavior in the human female. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953

<sup>23</sup> Heiman, J.R. (1975) "The physiology of erotica", a *Psychology Today*, 8(11), 90-94

<sup>24</sup> GILLIGAN, C., LYONS, N.P. & HANMER T.J. Making connections. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1990, 334 pgs.



Puberty is the most critical period of time for the girl, during menarche the fear of the girl to receive harm in her genitals increases. Let us take into consideration that this period is very complex because there are three aspects being articulated: 1) All the phantasmatic that the girl has processed during infancy, 2) with the consequences of beginning to act her sexuality, 3) together with the discovery of the violence that is associated to sexuality. Domestic violence, both real and written, as well as what she sees on tv about the feminine role in sexuality must have some incidence in the repression as well. So much so that we can see how she behaves “like a silly girl” before such a complex situation. On one hand she knows about the violence on the woman’s body, therefore on her body. On the other her whole body is sexualised by the looks of men, who see it as erotic. She knows she is part of this game, although she does not want to, and she feels guilty. It is because of this precocious sexualisation that she “acts like a silly girl”, because she does not have enough elements available to manage it. This defence will take her to repression, not to recognise the arousal.

Let us see how these things happen:

### Feminine masochism or defensive masochism?

According to Freud in “Female sexuality” and in “Femininity” the feminine masochism is forged in the psychobiological experiences of menstruation, deflowering, childbirth, and care of the baby. The triad: castration, rape and childbirth-maternity will constitute the compulsory normality of her psychosexual development. The girl has to abandon her masculinity complex through a passive masochist position.

On the other hand, according to the ghost of the originary scene, the girl supposes that the woman, the mother suffers intercourse and she enjoys such suffering. The girl’s perception of the parental intercourse is a battle: the moans, the intertwined bodies, the warmth,... Besides, when she puts herself in her sexual role, she gets passivised. The condition seems to be to suffer violent intercourse, to put her body in a position in which she seems to be violated. There’s some truth in what she perceives, since the man’s violence on the woman is not an infantile theory like the fantasy of castration is for the boy.

We could begin to understand this passive position as the traditional way of organising the girl’s sexuality: a desire that awakens in the mind of the man in the presence of the sexual attribute of the body of the girl; the girl’s tuning in to this wishful intentionality in the other, which is lived as an invading arousal that comes from her own body. A body that is invaded, which the man’s looks undress or on which he puts his hand.

The originary ghost passivises the girl and makes her suffer violence, thus, the masochist ghost is the usual way in which her femininity is sexualised. The girl’s sexuality, then, is doubly threatening, as an implanted drive, and as violence to be suffered.

Summarising, there are several conditions in which “unpleasantness” goes with the girl’s, the young woman’s and the adult woman’s experience. Psychoanalysis has called them masochists, but let us not forget that for it to be real masochism there has to be an obtaining of pleasure. What we often observe is that we are dealing with a defensive

masochism (or pseudomasochism), that is to say, of a suffering that keeps at bay, neutralises, diminishes or at least controls another greater danger or suffering.

### Coating of the whole body as a sexual organ

There's a great asymmetry in the sexual position of the boy and the girl. He never fears the physical harm she may cause him. The girl, on the other hand, has a different emotional experience: the one who arouses and she desires, the father in the first place, may hurt her when penetrating her with such a large organ, which besides is a urethral one, in an act that she perceives to be violent.

Sexual desire toward the parents generates guilt in the girl and fear of losing the penis through castration in the boy.

Boys repress their incestuous love, and girls, who also repress it, also flagellate themselves with guilt. The explanation can be found in the complex operation that takes place in the early sexualisation of her whole body. Sexualisation means the intrusion of sexuality in a place that is not sexual.

During latency, when the girl is still very little, she turns out not to be indifferent to the look or the gesture of some adult men, for whom the grace and fragility of the girl's body is sexually exciting. The looks of these men make her feel naked and aroused. The initiative came from the adult but she experiences it as if she is provocative, she is the seducer. A sexualisation of the body of the girl is produced through the look and this comes with emotional reactions: shame, fear and guilt. The sexual meaning of this look, which invests the body of the girl erogenously, is denied.

The girl develops guilt in relation to sexuality because she assumes herself to be the seducer, that is to say, as having "effectively" provoked the father, the man, the adult in the ground of interpersonal relationships. She has proven the power of her attributes. She assumes the responsibility of having started the sexual device, when this was not the case. She simply possesses an attribute, her body, that awakens it.

Step by step, the girl is constructing a meaning of her whole body as a sexual organ and simultaneously a mental operation of dismissal of such a meaning. A kind of disowning and split mind-body, that allows her "to act silly" in the face of what she generates, so she does not feel afraid of the sexual violence to which she is exposed and which she incites, and in this way she can take advantage of her maximum narcissist capital: body and beauty, attributes that signify her as woman and the maintain her feelings of well-being.

### Sexualisation of femininity

What happened is that the whole body of the girl has been instituted and developed as an organ of sexuality. The woman is defined for the attribute of beauty. What happens then is that the whole body holds the nucleus of feminine identity. This takes place in an exogenous way, that is to say, it doesn't start from the individual experience of desire in the girl. Barbie dolls are an example of the silent way of exogenous implantation of a model of femininity full of sexual significance, that give shape and content to

femininity: they sexualise the whole body independently of the desire of the girl, understanding for desire of the girl an active movement of self-sexuality.

The girls are offered a hyper-sexualised ideal of feminine body, but not even integrated to unconscious sexual fantasies, nor self-erotic activities. We want to show the passive character of the girl in the process of structuring of her feminine being and the exogenous character of the implantation of hyper-sexualised shapes in her subjectivity .

On the one hand the body of the girl is sexualised, on the other, it is condemned, and the girl has to renounce to sexuality in general. Let us see how it takes place. For the boy, the father's law demands only that he gives up the mother in order to have access to all other women, whereas for the girl, the prohibition consists of renouncing sexuality as a whole; not renouncing the father to have access to all men, but to sexuality as an activity in order to have access to the love of a man, and like this, through love, enjoy a sexuality that is not threatening for narcissism, oriented to procreation.

In fact, it's not about a prohibition but a threat of powerful effects, since it touches identity: "A girl doesn't touch herself" (Whereas masculine sexuality takes place openly: it's frequent to see men touching their genitals, exhibiting, looking lewdly...) Besides, this threat is formulated by a person, the mother, who functions split in her own personality, between a sexualised body to attract the look, and a body not always sexualised to enjoy the drive. That is, of a mind in which the meanings of beautiful body for the look of the man and of erotic body for her own pleasure, may be developed non proportionally, and they can even keep isolated and split in the mind.

### The role of the look

We know that the masculine look is not only contemplative but a way of sexual enjoyment and conquest. Besides, we can state that an indisputable masculinity trait is the creation and the search of situations for the contemplation of the naked body of the women, and that indisputable trait of femininity is to offer exhibitionally to the contemplation and enjoyment of the man look.

But there is an intersubjective dynamic that makes this situation provoke different intrapsychic effects. Women feel observed even when they are alone. Naked even when dressed in extreme demureness. Again a peculiar subjective situation is generated, since if the girl finds the look that looks, this "giving the look back" acquires a quality of consent to the sexual significance of the look, a significance that did not come from her desire. The girl then learns not to look at men, to turn her sight aside, not to look in the eyes, to walk with her head turned downwards, and, if she wants to look, to deny of the sexual meaning.

### Differences in the legitimating of sexuality between the boy and the girl

A radical difference in relation to the public legitimization of the sexual behaviors takes place. The boy can touch his genitals in public without being told off. He can have sexual fantasies before adult women without them being much aware of what's going on, or without being defined or defining himself as committing a transgression. More than this, his clearly abusive sexual behavior can be approved, silenced, or not denounced as sexual violence. Let us recall the quote from "Femininity" of Freud: "the

achievement of the biological purpose has been given up to the man's aggression and somehow made independent of the woman's consent". We have another superb example in the case of "the rat man" in which Lawrence seduced his sister and as many women as he was able of, sometimes with drastic consequences –it seems that he drove one them to suicide- and with cunning, since he managed to take his friends' daughters in outings and then he masturbated them. Freud's only comment: the equivalence between clean hands, dirty hands and clean money, dirty money. And still another one in Dora's case. She was a 14-year-old girl when her father wanted "to give her away" to Mr. K. of over 40, and Freud was amazed at her not falling devoted to his feet, but he became kept about the abuse <sup>25</sup>.

For the girl things are radically different: in a moment when she was paying attention to something else, a look surprises her, disturbs her and arouses her, and this process takes place in the open air. The girl is defined and she defines herself as provocative, she feels persecuted by the adult discovery of her sexuality, scared at the adult reaction that she can't control, scared at her own that she controls even less because it appears without being originated from her desire, but of the only fact of the possession of a body that awakens the man's voyeurism. This operation affects her narcissism since her superego punishes her for the transgression and the ego feels that it cannot control. All of this affects her self-confidence. In spite of the fact that the sexual character of the experience is doubly non intentional, the women will be doubly made responsible of seduction: the seductive mother and the provoking woman, as figures which generate psychopathology, are the causal hypothesis of psychoanalysis and psychiatry.

"The legitimacy that the adult has for the sexual caress of the girl is extensive to his sexual practice of all kinds, and the sexual offence is not an aspect that generates shame or guilt" Op. Cit. in note 15, p. 380.

### Giligan's contributions

As current works by Brown and Gilligan<sup>26</sup> (1990) on the passage from puberty to adolescence show, this "acting silly" carries serious conflicts for the girl, which cause her to make many disconnections: between her body and her mind; between her wish and her word; between her ego and her relationships; between her feelings and inner thoughts and the external world, in life, in the public space. In this sense it has been found that this age is often the onset of somatic disorders, depressions, of self-esteem, of anorexia and bulimia. A report from 1986<sup>27</sup>, which is a meta-analysis of 23 research works about the psychiatric population in internal or external consultation, shows that there is an incidence of borderline personality disorders in 77% of the women of this population.

The feminine pathology has two relevant characteristics: its appearance after puberty and the incidence of sexuality in its causing. Probably we find a sexualisation process in the girl that is imposed upon her, which the adolescent will find it long and laborious to

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<sup>25</sup> CHODOROW, N.J. Femininities, masculinities, sexualities. London: Free Association Books, 1994

<sup>26</sup> BROWN, L. GILLIGAN, C. Meeting at the crossroads woman's psychology and girl's development, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992

<sup>27</sup> AKTHAR, & cols. (1986), "The demographic profile of borderline personality disorder", a *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 47, 196-198

accept. This may involve several anxieties, like the girl's concern about the integrity of her body, and the undesirable consequences that the satisfaction of sexual desire may involve.

Gilligan has made a lot of contributions to the study of the adolescent girl. In this work of 1990<sup>28</sup> she describes adolescence as an especially critical period because it poses a problem of connection rather than of separation.

Let us consider these concepts in depth because they are key to the theory we are showing. Margaret Mahler<sup>29</sup>, in 1975 completed the Freudian understanding of development. According to her description the child follows a gradual process of maturation from the indifferenciation of symbioses to separation-individuation. This intrasubjective theory holds that the final phase of development is to reach autonomy. The classical concept of psychological maturation is the ideal of the western culture: the autonomous, separated, self-sufficient individual. But this is a position of extreme loneliness, as Benjamin<sup>30</sup> shows in the quoted book. That's why Gilligan points out that the problem of adolescents is of connection. This problem is not easily resolved because our western thought tends to pose it in a polarized dichotomy, either she's self-sufficient or she's a good woman; either she excludes herself or she excludes others; ... In order for girls to respond to themselves they have to resist the convention of feminine goodness, and if they want to respond to others they have to resist the value that we give to self-sufficiency and independence. In other words, she has to split and choose between separation or connectedness.

Interviewing 12-year-old girls, she realized that they have an extraordinary knowledge of the human social world, a knowledge that they have picked up of what they see and what they hear, but that they can hardly defend because they are caught in a paradox; if they keep quiet, as they have seen the majority of women do, they lose the connection with the others, and if they talk of what see and feel, the same happens, because there are things that "one cannot say". Gilligan, Lyons y Hanmer<sup>31</sup> describe what Balenky<sup>32</sup> and cols. found in 1986: that women retire in silence when words become weapons and they are used to hurt. But this is a paradox for girls since they insist on their need for the conflict, if there is one, to be open so they can show their disagreement.

It looks as if between 12 and 15 girls move from the public sphere to the private. They have observed where and when women talk, and when they keep quiet, they have become aware of the acquiescence of many women to men's authority, they have observed that the message for women is: keep quiet, be aware of the absence of women and don't say anything. It is then when Gilligan finds out surprisingly that the girls have suppressed the knowledge that they themselves had just a few years before, and that pusillanimity and foolishness appear. The split and disconnections we mentioned above appear.

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<sup>28</sup> See note 26.

<sup>29</sup> MAHLER, M., PINE, F. & BERGMAN, A. The psychological birth of the human infant. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

<sup>30</sup> In her book quoted in note 13

<sup>31</sup> GILLIGAN, C., LYONS, N.P. & HANMER, T.J. Op. Cit. in note 24

<sup>32</sup> BALENKY, M. B. & cols. Women's ways of knowing. New York: Basic Books, 1986

Let us go back to Dio: the genital sexuality that the girl discovers is not only an alien experience, in that refers to adult sexuality, but also an alien sexuality that is legitimated for boys and men, but much less so for women and girls. This comes together with a facilitation of the exercising of sexual violence for males that is really puzzling to her, and generates in her psychic effects which are more or less “traumatising”, before which she may turn to isolation and vigorous denial of sexual violence through romanticising .

### Conclusions and considerations for analysis

It becomes an imperious necessity to rewrite the myths and for the woman herself to get hold of the world of women in order to be able to implant models that transform the institutions of the symbolic as well as the unconscious ghosts.

It is considered that the girl, from when she starts at school, consolidates her femininity in the articulation of her identity and in the orientation of her desire toward her father. These lines of structuring may coincide or may separate from each other, since the dimensions that organise subjectivity are multiple.

There also exists another multifactorial scene after birth, and the complex organisation of the sex-gender system is completed between both. These factors are:

- 1) The gender ghosts of the mother about the destiny of woman that awaits her daughter.
- 2) The father's ghosts.
- 3) The infantile experiences that shape the models and ideals of being a woman in the world.
- 4) The adults that serve as models for the girl, either of positive femininity or of negative.
- 5) The models of femininity prevailing in the surroundings of the girl.

These factors get crossed at the same time with:

- a. Libidinal and affective aspects of the intersubjectivity of the girl with her parents.
- b. The feminine and masculine identities of the mother and the father respectively.
- c. The degree of pleasure and satisfaction that each of them has with their identity.
- d. The couple model the adults bring to their children. The clinical work shows that this factor is of great importance for typifying and the gender assessment the girl makes.

We've seen that the repression of the girl's sexuality is of much greater intensity than the boy's, reaching the point of inhibition (Silverman, 1982)<sup>33</sup>. But studies of direct observation show that the girls' masturbation, rather than wrong, consolidates her feminine identity and is expression of the structuring of her desire.

Dio explains to herself the deeper repression of the girl because she acquires a “knowledge” during latency that consists of the following: sexuality marks the woman but not the man; it exerts a harmful action for the feminine identity. “Loose” or “easy” girls are the infantile synonym of “whore” or “prostitute”. So that the open manifestation of her sexual desire affects the girl's identity, her narcissism, her whole

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<sup>33</sup> “The latency period” en Early female development, MENDELL, D. (Comp) Jamaica: Medical and Scientific Books, 1982

being. During latency the girl also acquires a knowledge about sexual violence: she realises of the tolerance that exists for its expression in the male.

We have to begin to desexualise the “whole” of the entire body of the girl, and give her knowledge and name her organs and her pleasures: and legitimate them for her so that she can invest the erogenous area without being prevented by persecution anxieties or of guilt.

What constitutes the “masquerade” or the feminine “disguise” is her sexualisation. The sexualisation of the image of the woman contributes to the split or dissociation in the unconscious of her resistance to accept this identity. Whether she accepts it or if not it will be at the cost of suffering.

The women who devote ourselves to psychological and corporal analysis must make an additional effort. We must begin to consider the possibility that neither castration nor the Oedipus complex resolution in Freud’s terms are universal milestones of analysis; and be aware that if we keep on doing this we may produce damaging effects. As happened to Joan Riviere with a patient she had during the 20’s and about whom she wrote in 1929, Riviere interpreted her anguish in presence of the public situations in which she was involved as exhibitionistic desires, and of destructive rivalry (penis envy). What she was doing then was to legitimate and to give her approval to the idea that there are “natural” places for men, and that the occupation of these places by a woman is theft or usurpation. A woman interpreted in this way will feel guilt and doubts about her feminine condition, that will at the same time be inevitably translated into alterations and conflicts around her sexual area. This patient was telling, in her own words that “the relationship with her husband was excellent both in the affective as well as in the sexual intercourse, that was often and satisfactory”. This woman became frigid in the course of analysis.

The authors I read, particularly Benjamin and Dio, agree in underlying as a critical stage of development of the girl the subphase of rapprochement of Mahler, that is, they place it in the preoedipal period. Benajmin, besides, proposes a post-oedipal development stage<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> See book review: Concepció Garriga (1998) “The bonds of love” en *Bioenergetic Analysis. The clinical Journal of the IIBA*. 9(1), 117-120