The impact of Lacan's teaching on psychoanalysis with children

Eric Laurent

with the collaboration of
Robert Lefort, Rosine Lefort, Esthela Solano-Suárez
and Marc Strauss for the Third International
Encounter of the Freudian Field, Buenos Aires, 1984

That psychoanalysis with children exists is a fact that Lacan's teaching has never questioned. This is in contrast with the debates which have emerged in the sphere of influence of the IPA since the 1950s. The distance adopted in relation to the Annafreudian position by different sections of the psychoanalytic movement—and particularly in Argentina with the firm stance of Arminda Aberastury—has established the possibility of psychoanalysis with children. The entrenchment of the genetic illusion has led to locating the difficulties in the child himself, since according to that illusion the child's development is posited—or, to be more precise, thought of—as incomplete.

As an indication of the way practitioners within the IPA's sphere of influence raise these questions, we shall consider a round table discussion published in Number 5 of the *Revista de Psicoanálisis* of the APA (Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina). One of the participants, Aiban Hagelin says,

> When we psychoanalyse a child, we analyze the transference, the resistances and all the formations of the unconscious. Now, what is different? The difference is only quantitative and it is a matter of proportion. In the case of the adult we draw inferences from words, discourses, acts, imaginary productions, dreams, fantasies, delusions. It is the same with the child, except that the latter acts more, his associative discourses are more restricted, although they increase with age. The child's desires are externalised and dramatised through play. In the case of the adult we come to the aid of an altered psychical apparatus. In the case of the child, we come to the aid of a psychical apparatus in formation.

This psychoanalysis of a psychical apparatus in formation leaves the practitioners ill at ease with a problem of legitimacy.

Another participant at the same round table, Aurora Perez, remarks,

It seems to me that today we child psychoanalysts are in search of our own legitimacy. I am tired of this problem; I have written in an article that this is one of our many splits. It seems to me that we can consider ourselves psychoanalysts, and psychoanalysts of children, that we have our place, despite all the questioning that currently assails us.

Lacan's teaching, from the Rome Report on, considers that it is not the child that is the problem in psychoanalysis, but rather the consequences that the practitioners extract from their action with the child. In the 1950s Lacan saw this as a specialised field in which the two forms of an apparent reform introduced around a non-existent notion in Freud and around an inclination that was foreign to him were efficaciously deployed. The notion is that of the partial object, introduced by Karl Abraham in 1924, which remained uncriticised precisely until the Rome Report. The inclination is the rise to the summit of analysis, not only of what Freud in the *Traumdeutung* called "considerations of representability", but also of a veritable passion for the inventory of the imaginary forms of fantasy, due to the success of Kleinian research. We refer to the Rome Report, in which psychoanalysis with children is regarded as a "fertile and tempting field offered to the attempts of researchers by access to the formation of structures at the preverbal level", which produced "a return in the same direction by posing the problem of what symbolic status is to be given to fantasies in their interpretation."[1]

The questions concerning technique and transference which worried authors in the 1950s are thus relocated in their true perspective, that of psychoanalysis as such. The impact of Lacan's teaching, as calling into question the partial object and the presentation of fantasy that this object permits, is understood by certain practitioners, specially in Argentina, to call play technique into question. An illustration of this is an article published in the first issue of the review *Trabajo de Psicoanálisis* which appeared in Mexico in 1981, by Silvia Bleichmar. In this article, "Rethinking the psychoanalysis of children", she makes the following retrospective remarks:

From the 1970s in Argentina, my country, a very complex movement has emerged in the theory, which has led to a crisis of the theoretical and clinical models that had been followed until then. Until that time the predominance of the English school, of the stream supported by Melanie Klein, had guided our work. . . . In the field of psychoanalysis of children, the situation became very complex, given that a certain

---

[1] "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis", in *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: Tavistock, 1977), 35.

purism, which made psychoanalysis exclusively the field of language and the discursive movement of the patient, produced a crisis in the play technique proposed and developed by Melanie Klein, on which our work had been based.

What was perceived as a difficulty by certain practitioners was immediately seen by others as a way forward and as an avenue for the clarification of the difficulties produced by psychoanalysis with children.

We shall follow the progress of the impact of Lacan's teaching, not as a doctrine but as a movement, a dialogue between him and those among his pupils who have had a special interest in these questions over the years. First we shall see how the initial consequence of Lacan's teaching was the restoration of the phallic object as different from the partial object in this specialised field. The renewal of these questions has an eponymous name: Françoise Dolto. We shall then see how the exhaustion of her approach and the internal contradictions that it produced displaced the emphasis onto another point deduced from Lacan's teaching, namely the mother's enjoyment [*jouissance*] qua enjoyment that is not subsumed under the phallus. This moment also has an eponymous name: Maud Mannoni. Finally, we shall see how new directions for research have emerged from the current state of our relation to Lacan's teaching. The works of Robert and Rosine Lefort, or of psychoanalysts of a new generation, permit the reformulation of the approach to autism in the child and the problems posed by infantile psychosis.

The phallus is not a partial object

Lacan himself extracts the consequences of the *Bedeutung* of the phallus in the approach to children. He devotes his seminar on the object relation to this question, reconsidering the case of Little Hans. He carefully distinguishes between the phobic object and the fetish object, and locates the place of the phallic signifier in the three registers of neurosis, psychosis and perversion.

Those who practice psychoanalysis with children are not mistaken over this. We have testimony to these effects in the publication of Françoise Dolto's *Dominique*. In the case of this boy, who is defined as psychotic, the author considers that the subjective position "has escaped humanising castration", which has left him at the mercy of an "image without speech". The use this child makes of fantasies in the "aim of narcissistic enjoyment" should not create any illusion; it leaves him in the status of fetish object for the mother. "Dominique, apparently well adapted, was ignorant of his *role as fetish*." And again: "It was only as a phallic fetish that Dominique attained any value." It is on the basis of this status as fetish that the psychoanalyst is

able to attribute to the birth of his little sister all its traumatising value: "From the day of his sister's birth, Dominique lost his points of reference. . . [and] suffered a complete *denarcissisation*." Here the child's situation as maternal phallus, in the modality of fetish, is isolated in a manner that has no equivalent among English-language psychoanalysts of the same period. However, an internal difficulty emerges: how is one to distinguish clearly between the child's normal identification as the mother's phallus and the identification that fixates the neurosis and may even lay the ground for psychosis? The author herself gives evidence of her difficulty, as is shown, for example, by her resorting to the category of hope:

> The onset of a severe obsessional neurosis at the moment of the birth of the sister became a regression to a psychotic state upon the refusal of any hope of evolution. Waiting to grow up, which is the consoling fantasy of all narcissistic injuries . . . no longer made sense for Dominique.[2]

It is therefore by resorting to the sole identification with the maternal fetish that the author provides an account of the establishment of a structure that she herself calls paranoic and delusional, the culmination of a series of successive reorganisations which in the first place produced a personality only in appearance, then a severe neurosis, and finally a psychosis, the whole thing determined by the mother's perversion.

From the maternal perversion to the mother's fantasy

In the 1960s Maud Mannoni displaced the impact of Lacan's teaching by generally positing the child as the object of the mother's fantasy. This fantasy is not considered as consolatory, but rather on the basis of its effect of compulsory residence. For Maud Mannoni this effect seems to be causally sufficient for a series of disorders, from mental retardation to psychosis. In *The Retarded Child and Its Mother* the author points out: "The child is trapped in the maternal fantasy .... The child, destined to fill the mother's lack-in-being, has no other meaning than to exist for her and not for himself."

The author derives support from this unicity of the fantasy to then say that the child and his mother form only one body:

> The retarded child and his mother form at certain times only one body, the desire of one being confused with that of the other, . . . a body affected, as it were, by identical injuries which have acquired a signifying mark. That which, in the mother, has not

---

[2] *Dominique: Analysis of an Adolescent* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974).

been able to be resolved at the level of the experience of castration, will be lived out as an echo by the child who, in his symptoms, will often do nothing other than give voice to maternal anxiety.[3]

Within this perspective, which is underlined by a footnote on the conception of desire in Lacan's teaching, the first difficulty which arises is how to distinguish the normal structuration of desire from its pathological structuration. From the moment the structure of desire is that of being the desire of the Other, how can one distinguish what is pathological in the confusion with the desire of the Other? Hence the emphasis Maud Mannoni places on the fact that the criterion used is the "fusion of bodies".

Lacan questions this solution in his *Seminar XI* of 1964. Noting the publication of Mannoni's book and recommending its reading, he rectifies its thesis. The bodies of mother and child do not become fused; rather, the first couple of signifiers becomes a holophrase when the child is reduced by the mother to "being no more than the support of her desire in an obscure term". Making the signifying chain continuous is then presented as the common point for an entire series of cases which are different from one other in so far as the subject "does not occupy the same place in each".[4] This place, indicated by the notation (i(a, a', a", a"', . . .)), will be written simply as *a* in Lacan's subsequent teaching.

In 1965, in the preface to the translation of President Schreber's *Memoirs*, whose richness Jacques-Alain Miller has highlighted, Lacan insists upon the novelty that his teaching of those years presents:

The polarity, recently promoted, . . . between the subject of enjoyment [*jouissance*] and the subject that the signifier represents for an always other signifier—isn't it this that allows us to define paranoia more precisely as identifying enjoyment in its locus of the Other as such?[5]

In his closing remarks at a colloquium on "alienated childhood" organised at the initiative of Maud Mannoni, which assembled a great diversity of practitioners, Lacan concluded on a note of disagreement. He regretted that "nothing has been more rare in our discussions over these last two days than recourse to one of those terms that may be called the sexual relation, the

---

[3] *The Retarded Child and Its Mother* (London: Tavistock, 1973).

[4] *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 237-8.

[5] "Présentation des *Mémoires* du president Schreber en traduction française", *Ornicar?* no. 38 (1986), pp. 5-9.

unconscious, enjoyment . . . whose presence has not been articulated theoretically". In a series of propositions that he himself acknowledges to be "speech from which agreement is excluded, aphorism, confidence, persuasion, even sarcasm", he affirms that in the case of children as anywhere else, "the value of psychoanalysis is that it operates on fantasy [which it would be] impossible to budge, were it not for the margin left by the possibility of exteriorising the object *a*". This possibility must be distinguished from what Lacan called, in his critique of Kleinian treatment, "the projection of the bad internal objects onto the analyst". The object *a* is not the partial object, even if only because of its exteriority in relation to the subject. Lacan observes that in psychoanalysis with children the analyst defines his position as "opposing the child's body representing the object *a*, . . . in which enjoyment is condensed, in so far as, through the regulation of pleasure, enjoyment is taken away from the body".[6]

In a letter to another practitioner, Jenny Aubry, in 1969 Lacan clarifies the difference he draws between the child's identification with the symptom and identification with the object of the mother's fantasy:

> In the conception developed by Jacques Lacan the child's symptom is found to be in a position of answering to what is symptomatic in the family structure.
>
> The symptom, which is the fundamental fact of analytic experience, is in this context defined as the representative of truth.
>
> The symptom may represent the truth of the family couple. This is the most complex case, but also the one that is most open to our intervention.

Thus Lacan emphasises the position of the symptom as a response of the child—and the term "response" must be emphasised, as Jacques-Alain Miller has done in his course, "Response of the real". If the child's symptom is a response which is equated with the truth of the familial couple, this emphasises the fact that the paternal metaphor must have operated for there to be any family structure as such. Lacan distinguishes precisely the case in which the paternal metaphor has not operated:

> The distance between identification with the ego ideal and the portion taken from the mother's desire, should it lack the mediation which is normally provided by the function of the father, leaves the child open to every kind of fantasmatic capture. He becomes the mother's "object" and has the sole function of revealing the truth of this object.

---

[6] *Enfance aliénée II, Recherches*, Paris, 1968.

[Thus] the child *realises* the presence of what Jacques Lacan designates as the *objet a* in fantasy.

In substituting himself for this object, he saturates the mode of lack in which the (mother's) desire is specified, whatever it's special structure—neurotic, perverse or psychotic.[7]

At the end of the 1960s Lacan's teaching made it possible to place in a series the child's different positions which emerge in response to the question that he poses to himself in relation to the mother's desire. One must distinguish between the child as the mother's phallus, the child as a symptom—not as a symptom of the mother, but of the familial couple—, and the child as realising the object of the mother's fantasy. "The child as the mother's symptom" is easy enough to say—but it is a dead-end position. Similarly, the reference to the supposed "perversity of the mother" in general must be placed in a more precise context. It is not a question of the relation to a perversion of the mother, but rather of the place that the child will occupy in her fantasy, which has to be characterised in each particular case. Only by differentiating these various positions can we reconsider the question of the attention paid to the so-called familial discourse and the consequences this has for the child. Making vague reference to this discourse is insufficient; it is moreover necessary to identify how the child responds to it, and to take into account that the priority of psychoanalysis with children is to listen to the children's own discourse, disengaged from that of the parents, to which the child's discourse is not an appendix but a response.

We now return to the difficulty that Lacan's teaching is purported to create for practitioners of play technique.

On play technique

While it is certainly true that in our practice, we require—although not systematically—the support of a whole series of "trifling objects", as Lacan put it, if we want to establish contact with children, what the child does with them in his play is articulated by virtue of structure, in the same sense in which we can read that "the sexual impasse exudes the fictions that rationalise the impossible from which it originates. I am not saying that they are imagined; like Freud, I read in them the invitation to the real that underwrites them."[8]

---

[7] "Note on the child", *Analysis*, this issue.

[8] Jacques Lacan, *Television*, in *October* no. 40 (1987), p. 34.

With play it is therefore not a question of a pure and simple deployment of imagination, a notion that must be rejected from the perspective of the theory of the signifier, but of a response of the real which has its cause in the impossible of the sexual relation.

Thus in children's play in so far as this is a construction of fiction we find a response of the real, that is to say, an effectuation of the subject of the unconscious, in so far as the subject, "as effect of meaning, is a response of the real."[9]

How are we going to respond, from the place of the analyst, to that which presents itself as a response of the real at the level of the fictions produced by the child during analytic treatment? The answer to this question concerns the direction of the treatment, in particular at the level of its central point: the handling of transference, as the key to the analytic act.

Arminda Aberastury, the pioneer of the psychoanalysis of children in Argentina and a disciple of Melanie Klein, whose practice testifies to her genius as to her fine and penetrating intuition, writes,

> In my experience, through the utilisation of play technique the child has the capacity to establish in an *immediate and spontaneous* manner, a transference onto the analyst of the positive and negative feelings he feels towards his originary objects, and also to repeating events and symptoms in the transference, in an unconscious form.[10]

She is quite right to emphasise that in analytic experience with children the transference is established in an immediate and spontaneous manner. She makes the observation that, as a phenomenon, the transference is present from the beginning. This is precisely what Lacan writes in his *Proposition du 9 octobre 1967 sur le psychanalyste de l'Ecole*: "In the beginning of psychoanalysis there is the transference. This is so by the grace of him whom, at the beginning of these remarks, we shall call the psychoanalysand". Following this observation, he turns to the question of what the transference is.[11]

In A. Aberastury's approach we find a reconsideration of the Kleinian theses in which the transference is approached from the side of the imaginary—in the analytic relation the patient projects and repeats the

---

[9] Jacques Lacan, "L'Etourdit", *Scilicet* no. 4 (1973), p. 15.

[10] "La transferencia en el análisis de niños, en especial en los análisis tempranos", *Revista de Psicoanálisis* 9 (1952), 266.

[11] *Scilicet* no. 1 (1968), p. 18.

feelings of love and hate, fantasies, anxieties and defenses that have appeared over the course of initial object relations.

The dualism of this primitive relation is clearly formulated by Melanie Klein in her article, "The origins of transference": "It is an essential feature of this earliest of all object-relations that it is the prototype of a relation between *two* people into which no other object enters."[12]

Put in these terms, the analysis of the transference thus places the dialectic of the treatment on the specular axis, whose outcome is the myth of the One, a unification that results from the virtues of love and the feelings of separation. As A. Aberastury says,

> When in the course of normal development the division between persecutory and idealised objects diminishes, and when hate is mitigated by love, it is then possible to establish good objects in the internal world. In the course of treatment this acquisition produces a cure.[13]

We may wonder what sort of identification is the price the child pays to arrive at this result—perhaps identification with the supreme signifier.

Now, Lacan's teaching subverts precisely the approach that regards the transference as intersubjective. It is on this plane that the question has to be located, and not at the level of the technique utilised in psychoanalytic treatment with children. In this treatment, as in any other, the analyst is in the position of reinventing psychoanalysis: in his act, he should not respond from a position of knowledge [*savoir*].

The transference is a symptomatic manifestation of the unconscious, and this is called the supposed subject of knowledge, which in itself is an obstacle to intersubjectivity since it implies that "something can be said without any subject knowing it".[14] To suppose that there is a subject of knowledge is a logical consequence for all speaking beings [*parlêtre*], in every formulation of any unconscious.

But this subject, in so far as it is an effect of meaning, does not suppose anything; it is supposed—by whom? By the signifier, Lacan says, which represents the subject for another signifier. Here lies the pivot of the transference. The supposed subject of knowledge, in so far as it is "the signifier introduced in the discourse which is being established", is the ternary element in a "situation agreed upon by two partners, who occupy

---

12 *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works. 1946-1963* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), 49ff.

13 "La transferencia", 268.

14 Jacques Lacan, "La méprise du sujet supposé savoir", *Scilicet* no. 1 (1968), p. 38.

positions within it as the psychoanalysand and the psychoanalyst".[15] This explains perfectly well why, when one approaches the transference from the structural point of view, it is not a question of intersubjectivity. For every treatment, therefore, the question of the transference can be tackled from the point of view of the structure, and analysis of the transference implies the elimination of the supposed subject of knowledge.

What about the analyses of children? Like every speaking being, the child is caught up in the supposed subject of knowledge, but given his position of dependence in relation to the adult it so happens that for him the adult Other knows. What he extracts from the Other as knowledge is meaning, particularly as concerns sex and death—meaning which touches the question of desire, and in relation to which the *why?s* of the child, addressed to the enigma of that which is actualised for him in the intervals, the blanks, in what the adult articulates, are to be understood in the sense of a *"Che vuoi?"*.

For anyone who occupies the place of the Other in relation to a child, it is particularly seductive to give the child an answer. Is this what the analyst is going to do? The question of the relation between psychoanalysis and pedagogy lies here. No analyst should respond on the basis of a knowledge which could induce in the analysand, through this avenue, an identification with any ideal whatever. If there is a response from the analyst, it is only articulated in the analytic act—an "act based on a paradoxical structure in that the object is active and the subject is subverted".[16]

If in the mechanism [*dispositif*] of the analytic discourse the analyst occupies the place of semblant of the object *a*, there is a chance, through an encounter, that knowledge shall come to occupy the place of truth in the interpretation, and thereby that in the course of an analysis the un-known [*le non-su*] shall be arranged as the framework of knowledge.

On the basis of these considerations on the transference, which consist in decentering the analytic treatment from its intersubjective connotations, we can now explore the question of interpretation. An interpretation is only operational and efficacious if it is produced under transference, that is to say, if it is articulated with the existence of a supposed subject of knowledge, which in no way implies that it involve the utterance by the analyst of a piece of knowledge [*un savoir*].

The unconscious proceeds by interpretation in the formations of the unconscious which are deduced from it (dreams, lapsus, jokes). We can also

---

15 "Proposition", 20.
16 "La méprise", 34.

say that the "material" that the child brings to his analytic session—drawings, stories, games, etc.—already constitutes interpretations which aim at giving a sense to that which, from the real, emerges in the trauma.

Is the analyst going to add his own interpretations? Yes, in those cases where he considers that he knows something about the object in question and that he must provide the necessary correction to the "naive" interpretation produced by the child. In these cases we find what Lacan calls the "intrusive character of a veneer on the subject",[17] produced by the Kleinian interpretation, which induces in the subject "a controlled paranoia".[18] This type of interpretation does not impugn the supposed subject of knowledge. On the contrary, it implies that the analysis is conducted under the assumption of the existence and possibility of a sexual relation that is always evoked, always present and referred to the person of the analyst. This possibility is homologous to a necessary supposition: that of Woman, the true supposed subject of knowledge that the analyst would be. It can be appreciated how through this avenue everything in the analyst that is contingent with respect to the phallic function is evacuated.

From this perspective it would be possible to identify the deviation towards a perverse position in certain cases of treatment—as in the case of young Luis presented by A. Aberastury in "La transferencia en el análisis de niños".

Interpretation, if we follow the indications formulated in Jacques Lacan's teaching, is that which operates as a cut, a scansion at the level of what is spoken, in order to isolate what is apophantic in speaking. Somewhere between enigma and citation, it plays with equivocation, logic and grammar. Far from providing any meaning whatever as a response to the "*Che vuoi?*", it is the interpretation of the sense that aims at that radical ab-sense [*ab-sens*] which is written as S(Ø).

Operating through the suppression of a response would make it possible to leave the place of the object cause of desire always empty and, consequently, to maintain a distance between the I(O), in so far as this is the point of appeal of every identification, and the separating *a*.

What criterion, then, can we use to determine the end of the psychoanalytic treatment of a child?

---

[17] *The Seminar. Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique. 1953-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 74.

[18] "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis", in *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: Tavistock, 1977), 15.

We can suggest that the only possible answer is an ethical one and that in this case as in others "there is no other ethics than that of the well-said". That the child be able to locate himself in the structure, extricating himself from the place that he has occupied in the fantasy of the Other, whereby his symptom and his suffering are correlated with enjoy-meant [*jouis-sens*] in the Other—these are the structural axes by which we can orientate ourselves in order to locate the end of the analysis of a child. At any rate, once he reaches this point, he will not fail to drop us.

The child's body and the object *a*

The existence of a sexual relation possible to write determines Melanie Klein's or even, although different from the Kleinian position, Winnicott's approach to infantile sexuality. Instance Melanie Klein's first interpretation to Dick—the train which enters the station is a representation of the sexual relation—or Winnicott's first interpretation to Piggle—in connection with a pencil that she had placed in a truck.

There are many consequences of the existence of such a relation for the centrality of the dialectic in question: that of the body. If there is a sexual relation, the body of the Other—the mother's body and then the father's body—will play a part as existent, as depository or carrier of real objects which the child would like to take or destroy, since, not actually being able to take them, he is persecuted by them. We do not fail to acknowledge this perspective, but this is only one particular case. It still has to be articulated in relation to the nature of the Other in psychosis. We shall return to this point. If we closely follow both clinical experience and the structure that it implies, it appears that the body in question—in psychoanalysis with children, and particularly in the case of very young children—is the body of the subject in analysis, and if the subject questions the body of the Other, it is evidently not to take from it some object that would complete him, but rather to find in it the impossible of this object, the fall of this object, the irreducible loss that will condemn him definitively, in his object relation, to a relation with the lack of object, from which his desire will be born. As far as the object is concerned, its mutation from real into signifier will give birth to a subject dedicated [*voué*] to these signifiers, alienated and divided by them. Far from being the reservoir of real objects, the Other will only be the locus of signifiers, thus losing the dimension of its own existence if indeed it has ever had one.

We find an illustration of such a process in Nadia, for example—bear in mind that she is thirteen months old—during the session of 5 December.[19] On that day she wanted to take the object which is in the body of the analyst, that is to say the Other, as she shows by closing her hands over the analyst's breast. But, in the face of the impossibility of extracting the real object, the signifier emerges for the first time, the signifier that is the vehicle of the object in the form of the "*mama-mama*" that pacifies her and makes tenderness possible for her. The object that she was attempting to seize has vanished, making room for the jaculation of the signifier: the object has fallen out, the signifier has produced a cut, thus founding the alterity of the Other through the object *a* that falls, which in this case is the primordial object, the breast.

Thus the falling out of the object has two consequences: the Other ceases to be its real vehicle and thereby finds itself barred, (Ø), and is no longer the first specular lure of the Other as mirror, characteristic of transitivism. Likewise, on the side of the subject, the fall of the object marks him with a bar also—($).

Henceforth, everything is ready for Nadia to inscribe her desire for the object within the frame of the fantasy—$ ◊ *a*.

This is not the case for Robert, the Wolf Child, who is the object of a book to be published,[20] of which a summary can be found in Lacan's *Seminar, Book I*. He is a psychotic of three years and nine months of age for whom both the relation with the Other and the relation with the object show that the fall of the object *a* has become impossible. This is because on the one hand his Other is invulnerable, which means that it cannot be barred—he has assumed the responsibility and the defence of the Other, as Schreber has done with God—and on the other the object cannot fall because it remains real, that is to say, it does not undergo the mutation into a signifier (we should point out that the object is the feeding bottle, which he does not and never will name). The alterity of the Other can find no support in it, any more than Robert has access to the mediation of fantasy in his relation with the Other. However, as with any psychotic, Robert is situated within language, and this imposes a loss on him, the loss of the object that, just as in Nadia's case, he cannot have. For want of an object that has fallen out, he must really deprive himself of one by attempting to mutilate his own penis, even as he proposes himself as the object of the Other so that the Other not be damaged; he thus

---

19 Rosine & Robert Lefort, *Naissance de l'Autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 48-9.

20 See Rosine & Robert Lefort, *Les structures de la psychose: L'Enfant au loup et le President* (Paris: Seuil, 1988).

makes himself the object of the Other's enjoyment—this is the path chosen by psychosis to resolve the enigma of the object, between having it and being it.[21]

In summary, the different phases of Robert's treatment, as dependent on his relation with the Other in the transference and the interventions of the analyst, can shed light on the clinical and topological evolution of the constitution of his body, that is to say, of what is in question for all psychotics.

Initially, Robert designates his body's hole by the signifier "wolf" [*loup*]. This is a pseudo-hole, impossible to inscribe in the Other, except by designating it by this "wolf", which may ultimately be regarded as a delusional metaphor.

In a second phase, Robert makes this signifier the representative of his relation with the external world as threatening and persecutory—an exclusive relation that concerns both the anxiety of the Other's absence when the Other goes away, and the relation with the contents of his body which the Other imposes on him to fill him up, or demands from him to then throw away.

The only remaining trace of the envelopes of such a body is his apron, which he cannot bear being removed from him without his suffering the greatest distress and horror.

During the treatment he thus gradually expresses the necessity for him to rediscover an envelope for his body. The analyst responds with a construction, which makes a metaphor of his relation to the Other and replaces the delusional metaphor of his "wolf", which disappears over the three subsequent sessions.

Robert is then able to establish, through the cut of the signifier, the surface of his body, or rather his body *qua* surface, his skin, which takes the place of the apron. It is in the course of a session of baptism that while completely naked he splashes his body with a mixture of water and milk, under the gaze of the Other, saying his name, "Robert", while he touches his body, thus proposing himself to the recognition of the Other.

He will, moreover, re-establish this recognition after a fairly lengthy trajectory, this time in the mirror, since when he discovers his image there he is able to turn around and laugh as he takes the Other as a witness, and then—but only then—reach *i(o)*, the ideal ego. His body's hole ceases to be an isolated, false hole. He has been born as a subject and has emerged from psychosis. His speech bears this out in his everyday life.

---

[21] See Rosine & Robert Lefort, "The first three sessions of the treatment of the Wolf Child", *Analysis*, this issue.

In a last phase, which had in fact begun even before the encounter with the mirror, Robert, who had escaped practically all infections and illnesses, was able to suffer in his body and fall ill, that is, to express in somatic symptoms the signifying status of his body, which can be represented by one signifier for another signifier—was thus able to explore what the pair S_1–S_2 is to him. A series of events bears this out.

One day, during a session, he took off his apron and threw it like a rag into a bowl of water, thereby affirming that he no longer needed this artificial envelope that others had been putting on him and that bound him to them, not so much in the form of an object *a* as in the form of a superego, the remnant of a proof that did not pass unnoticed. Similarly, as regards the objects in the consulting room, which over a long period he had piled up around himself as a rampart, and taken away with him at the end of each session, he was one day able to abandon them and emerge from the session empty-handed, but leaving all the objects as a memoir around the baby with which he had played in his sessions, and then when a little later on he cried, expressing through his tears—so unfamiliar to him previously—a normal distress on the analyst's leaving the institution in which he was living. These tears were the sign that a different relation with the Other had taken the place of the objects in which he used to lose himself. Furthermore, he was capable of anticipating and asking for his session when the analyst was not there, whereas previously there had been a complete absence of demand.

This new relation with the Other appears clearly in three events. Subsequent to frustration in the course of a session, he is capable of attacking the body of the Other directly. This is not simply an external body to be destroyed, but rather the body as vehicle of an object—and not just of any object. Removing the analyst's blouse a bit, Robert bites her back. Finally, the Other can be the vehicle of an object cause of desire.

As to his own body, however, somatic symptoms previously unknown to him make their appearance—sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea. This is an emptying of the body, to be sure, but one that has nothing to do with the preceding real hole, since his body, along with the body of the Other, is made present in these somatic symptoms. In waiting for a signifier that comes from, and that is articulated as coming from, the Other, it could be said that his S_1, which represents him and in which one day he alienates himself to the point of fainting—he disappears in it—, expects knowledge [*savoir*] from the Other, S_2, which will produce separation, and whose absence on the part of the Other leaves him the depository—holophrase S_1–S_2.

S_2, knowledge about his somatic symptoms, is eventually assumed by the analyst in a session held outside the usual room, due to Robert's being sick in

S_2, knowledge about his somatic symptoms, is eventually assumed by the analyst in a session held outside the usual room, due to Robert's being sick in bed. The analyst talked to him about his symptoms and their sense in relation to the objects which had been the support of his bodily castration. Robert literally drank up her words; and the proof that Robert's somatic symptoms actually were the desire for a signifier in waiting is that the following day he was well again.

The transference psychosis

Its coordinates are necessarily different from those of transference neurosis. For neurosis, the analyst is "naturally" called to occupy the point of address of the subject's discourse and thereby complete the symptom, making the supposed subject of knowledge the pivot of the cure. Delocalisation of the address and autistic withdrawal do not situate knowledge in a third position, and they press the analyst to produce an irruption in a circularity that by virtue of its structure excludes him. That the child gets used to his presence and integrates him into his world is not sufficient. What should be the point of application for the analyst's intervention which will create the possibility of a dialectisable [*dialectisable*] opening?

This point can be designated as the symptom, which must be defined and distinguished from the mass of pathological phenomena by virtue of what of the specific position of the child it represents. In fact, while there exists a psychotic structure and a mass of undifferentiated phenomena from one child to the next, each child does however present a particularity which can be located in his relation to the Other through the enactment of a symptom.

The register of the signifier, like the body, is implicated in this symptom, in which the position of the subject, submitted to the impossible task of articulating his being as unleashed signifier and his being as refuse to one another, becomes manifest. This position, which as an attempt at recovery is equivalent to the product of the paranoic's delusional work, is destined to be endlessly repeated unless the Other is able to occupy a place in it . . . In a sense, the Other is already there, since the symbolic register is summoned there, but as an undifferentiated witness, neutralised by the invasion and unleashing of enjoyment [*jouissance*]. This is why through the symbolic—that is, through his speech—the analyst must touch the real and institute the transference. In constituting himself as the locus for the reception of the symptom, the analyst proceeds, not to an interpretation, but to a constitution that aims at disclosing for the child the symbolic coordinates of his history, of

his place as object in the fantasy of the maternal Other. This separation that the construction brings about, which has the effect of "prohibiting" enjoyment, situates the analyst in the position of a third term, and at the same time as he becomes the pivot around which the signifier is arranged there is produced an effect that localises enjoyment.

Bringing the analyst into play at the level of the real of the structure is equivalent to setting up a fantasy. But since in psychosis it is a question of a clinic of the real that is not excluded by castration, the object remains realised, within the subject's reach, as it were, like the suitcase of Bettelheim's Joey, ensuring its function as a "condenser of enjoyment".

Transference psychosis therefore makes the analyst, not the artifice that progressively unveils the structure, but a real intervener who through his functioning produces a separation, a cut, which enables enjoyment's removal from the field of the Other and in the same movement brings down the barriers, with all the symptomatic modifications this entails.

From the father to the worst [*Du père au pire*]

This working paper has emphasised the fact that the child is an analysand in the full sense of the term. One may raise the question of what the outcome of a psychoanalysis with a particular child will be. This question will have to be considered at a later stage. Suffice it to say here that at any rate we cannot be content with the criteria of cure that frequently appear in the English-language literature, which evokes the child's cognitive reconciliation with the symbolic system—by emphasising, for example, the neurotic child's more or less effective reintegration into normal education, or of that of the psychotic child into technical education. For us it is a question of situating the child's reconciliation, not with his mother, but with his enjoyment, such as he is able to have access to it in fantasy.

While every subject finds his hour of truth in his encounter with the object of the fantasy, there still remains the question how we are going to determine it for the child. This will not be by wagering on reconciliation with the father [*le père*], but rather on confronting the worst [*le pire*].

Translated by Leonardo S. Rodríguez

Originally published in Spanish in *¿Cómo se analiza hoy?* (Buenos Aires: Fundación del Campo Freudiano and Ediciones Manantial, 1984) and in French in *Ornicar?* no. 35 (1985).