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► To cite this version:

Mi-Kyung Yi. The Impasse of Femininity: A Paternal Heritage. *Recherches en psychanalyse*, 2012, Corps, identité et traumatisme / Body, Identity and Trauma, 2 (14), pp.127a-136a. 10.3917/rep.014.0127a . hal-01525197v2

HAL Id: hal-01525197

<https://hal.science/hal-01525197v2>

Submitted on 2 Jun 2017

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THE IMPASSE OF FEMININITY: A PATERNAL HERITAGE

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Association Recherches en psychanalyse | « [Recherches en psychanalyse](#) »

2012/2 n° 14 | pages 127a à 136a

ISSN 1767-5448

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://www.cairn.info/revue-recherches-en-psychanalyse-2012-2-page-127a.htm>

Pour citer cet article :

Mi-Kyung Yi, « The Impasse of Femininity: A Paternal Heritage », *Recherches en psychanalyse* 2012/2 (n° 14), p. 127a-136a.

DOI 10.3917/rep.014.0127a

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The Impasse of Femininity: A Paternal Heritage

L'impasse du féminin : un héritage paternel ?

[Online] Dec. 28, 2012

Mi-Kyung Yi

Abstract:

This text looks at the question of the feminine dimension which will be examined from a threefold perspective of: sexual identity, father / son filiation and otherness. Particular attention will be paid to the place of the feminine dimension in the psychosexual development of the male child and the incidences that the father / son relationship can produce on it. The examination of the stopping point that the feminine dimension constitutes and which, from father to son, forms the object of a trans-generational repetition, can shed further light on the nature of what Freud called “the dark continent”.

Résumé:

Notre propos se porte sur la question du féminin. Celle-ci sera interrogée sous un triple angle : l'identité sexuelle, la filiation père-fils et enfin l'altérité. Une attention toute particulière est prêtée à la place du féminin dans le développement psychosexuel de l'enfant de sexe masculin et aux incidences que la relation père-fils peut y produire. L'examen de ce point de butée que constitue le féminin et qui, de père en fils, fait l'objet d'une répétition transgénérationnelle pourrait apporter une lumière supplémentaire sur la nature de ce que Freud appelle le « continent noir ».

Keywords: femininity, sexual identity, the paternal, passivity, repetition, the trans-generational, masochism

Mots-clefs: féminité, identité sexuelle, paternel, passivité, répétition transgénérationnelle, masochisme

Plan:

“Son, You Mustn’t be Girlish”

The Refusal of the Feminine Dimension, its Sources and Figures

Father, What Do You Want to Say (to Me)?: Paternity and Femininity

He fears that shame will outlive him.

F. Kafka, in *Letters to His Father*.

*An innocent child, yes, that you were, truly, but still
more truly have you been a devilish human being!*

*And therefore take note: I sentence you now
to death by drowning!*

F. Kafka, in *The Judgement*.

A television debate on the evolving forms of couples brought together on the same set different representative guises of the modern bond between two individuals, ranging from the most traditional couple as a product of Catholic “nobility” to a homosexual couple, including mixed-race couples too. Somewhat mischievously,

the presenter asked the young husband of the Catholic couple what he thought about homosexual bonds. “I don’t feel that the question concerns me”, replied the young “noble” with evasive elegance. The presenter made no concessions to decorum, persisting, “Think carefully, it might happen *later on...* if one of your children were concerned, how would you react?”

Later on... The birth of a child constitutes one of the moments in adult life that are rich with the after-effects of the parents’ childhood desires. The happiness it can represent is accompanied by inevitable upheavals in libidinal investment and the movement of identification. The relation with the child and the confrontation with his budding desires reactivates in each of the parents a whole section of his childhood history. Given the fact that the child represents the dialectic between the “same” and the “other”, the parent-child relation calls in particular upon the narcissistic movement, as is borne out by the expression “his majesty the baby”. Likewise, for some, the arrival of a child of the same sex or the opposite sex can sound the hour of truth, mobilizing a series of conscious or unconscious defensive psychical dispositions.

Here we are concerned with the question of the feminine side. This will be examined from three angles: sexual identity; father/son filiation; and otherness. We will be paying close attention to the place of the feminine side in psychosexual development in the male child and to the points of incidence that the father/son relation can produce. It is not uncommon for the father/son relation to tie together in a conflictive way around a nerve center which is the feminine dimension. Even though the crux of this paper is concerned with the particular history of a male patient met in the setting of an analytic psychotherapy that we will be describing below, we think that an approach to the feminine dimension through the father/son relation can shed further light on what Freud calls the “dark continent”.

“Obscure and lacunar”, femininity seems to call upon negativity, lack, and what subtracts itself from any attempt at clarification. In Freud, if there is an enigma here, it is an enigma of becoming – at least for the girl – because the sexual organ of reference is the male organ. Regardless of one’s anatomical and socially prescribed sex, every human being is first of all a little man, says Freud. Looked at from the standpoint of the primacy of the phallus, the evolution of masculinity would seem to meet the feminine dimension in its negative becoming whose power as a threat and whose force for upheaval are decisive for the outcome of the Oedipal drama. The horror of the feminine dimension expresses the unacceptability of the risk that is run by the boy who is prey to his Oedipal torments.

With regard to the castration complex, it is rather the child of female sex who is supposed to awaken the parents’ castration anxiety. However, it often happens that the unconscious disregards the logical effect of the additive operation. “Becoming the father of a son” does not seem to preserve him from the fear of the feminine side; on the contrary, it can double the underlying anxiety. The importance of the projective movement, of which the child becomes the support, calls into question the stopping-point that the question of the feminine dimension constitutes at the intersection of the generations.

“Son, You Mustn’t be Girlish”

“I was never my father’s son, so how can I become a father?” This is how the patient whom I shall call Léony expresses his disarray and pain at not knowing how to be a father. A father of two young children, he wants to be a “good father” and continues to suffer from not having one himself. However, this wish did seem to him to be within his grasp – he lovingly devoted himself to most of the care given to his daughter – until the birth of a second child, a boy. With his son, he feels deadlocked, aggressive even. Then, as the sessions wear on, a long silence sets in, heavy with words that are laden with suppressed images, broken

only by his nervous coughing. It would take him a long while to voice his secret fear that the love he could lavish on his daughter with no difficulty might condemn his son to the same dread that has tormented him since his earliest childhood: to become girlish.

He has inherited this dread from his father, but not for having been loved too much. Léony's father would not bear the slightest sign of femininity that he thought he could make out in his sons and forbade them any activity that in his eyes would belong to a woman's affairs. For example, a boy should not stay at home during the day, but go out into the world; nor should he play a musical instrument or devote himself to reading. Any transgression of this paternal prohibition would give rise to corporeal punishment of a violence that was every bit as rampant as the father's rage. Having dared to play with a doll at the age of five or six, Léony was literally slammed against the wall.

"I came in place of a girl", repeats Léony. When his mother was pregnant, she expected him to be a girl, having already had a first son. Resolutely persuaded that she was bearing the daughter she so desired, she chose a girl's name which is in fact the female version of the father's name, Léon: Léonie. Once he had arrived in the world, the boy bore this name, albeit with the last letter modified. For their children, Léony and his wife have invented exotic sounding names that evoke another world. For his son, he insisted on choosing a name that "sounds hard".

Despite his age (thirty-something), Léony comes across as fairly young given his frail build and highly reserved manner. His son had just been born (he was two months old) when he decided to start psychotherapy. He stated that this was motivated by his anxiety attacks and some symptoms of a phobic type (phobia of public transport, the metro in particular, and a fear of fainting in public). These symptoms were also behind the distance he had taken from his professional milieu for a long period. I later learnt of the existence of another difficulty that was responsible for his professional isolation: his relationships with men, especially his male

superiors, which betrayed a "passional" or seductive bent, desire for revenge alternating with repentant submission.

"I would have liked to be a father without being a man", was the wish that Léony expressed when speaking about the impression he had, during each laborious act of lovemaking with his wife, that he was turning into someone else: someone strange and troubling, like the demon of his childhood nightmares which, in his description, lets show a certain image of male virility: strong, hairy, monstrous, violent and borderline sadistic. This representation of masculinity was also the one he received from his "smothering" father: he could not imagine the relations between his parents as anything other than the father raping the mother. Indeed, the maternal image was one of a put upon, mistreated, battered and thus depressed woman. He liked to think that his true father was elsewhere, both immaterial and untouchable, as was another maternal imago, the idealized, inaccessible and distant image of a saint in a sacrificial position.

Throughout his adolescence Léony had tried to protect his mother from his father's daily, misplaced violence, even if it means taking a few blows instead of her. "I gave up hope of ever seeing her defend herself", he says. This comment also illustrates his relationship with his father, which is formed of an explosive violence that now he sees, despite himself, emerging again in his relationship with his son. Access to father/son filiation seems to be tripping once again over the same stumbling block: the refusal and fear of the feminine dimension.

When in our first interviews I ask him what kind of work he would like to undertake – face to face or lying down – he casts a furtive eye over the couch, both curious and troubled, and replies shaking his head: not that!

The Refusal of the Feminine Dimension, its Sources and Figures

In a well-known passage¹, Freud postulates that the rejection (*Ablehnung*) of femininity is one of the major hindrances to the dynamic of the

treatment. However, the modality of the rejection is not, so he says, identical in each sex: it appears as “penis envy” for the woman and, for the man, as “resistance to a passive or feminine attitude to another man”. The phallogocentric thesis has it that the woman is the negative figure of masculinity. Femininity inspires fear and rejection on account of *not having it*: it reactivates in the man his castration anxiety and revives in the woman her “narcissistic wound” from having been deprived of it. We may note that the female figure that mobilizes the man’s rejection in her relationship with him is solicited by the intermediary of the element of passivity. This link between passivity and femininity is all the more remarkable given that the Freudian theory of female sexuality relegates this link to a second rank behind the desire for a phallus-child.

Indeed, according to this theory of femininity which is centered on penis envy, the latter governs feminine sexuality from stern to stern. Following the girl’s trajectory from the bearer of substitutes of the coveted organ and sliding from penis to child in the symbolic chain, femininity carried through to its fully achieved state would look more like a secret detour towards the masculinity that was originally dreamt of but refused; femininity then presents itself in its very essence as a masquerade of the former masculine desire of possession of the penis. She is a woman because she doesn’t have one and she becomes it by wanting to have it.² Lacan’s statement that “The Woman doesn’t exist”³ has the merit of summing up the ultimate consequence of the Freudian theory which it extends and accentuates.

Therefore, outside the phallic logic, there is no woman. More precisely, there is no womanly body. Certainly, there is the maimed body with which the phallic theory identifies the female sexual organ and which, in the image of the Medusa’s head, seizes the direct gaze with terror. Now, this body from which the petrified gaze can no longer turn away is a wounded body; a surface wound considered to be a consequence of the cut. The terror that it can

inspire nevertheless allows itself to be represented; “Every painting is a Medusa’s head. One can overcome terror through the image of terror. Every painter is a Perseus”, said Caravaggio.⁴ Now, the adult female body is a body that opens from the inside as well as from the outside.⁵ Invisible and internal, it gives rise to anxieties that are hard to circumscribe.

Karl Abraham, and after him Karen Horney, Melanie Klein and Ernest Jones, have the same notion that there exists a female phase that constitutes the emergence from the inner world and which is characterized by the anxieties linked to attacks on the inner body. The anxiety associated with this infantile femininity outstrips the castration anxiety that “is only a part – though an important part – of the anxiety felt about the whole body [...]. [...] his anxiety about the interior of his body”.⁶

For the boy, phallic omnipotence represents an efficient way – largely favored by the external and visible dimension of the penis – of displacing internal dangers to the outside and contributes to his assumption of his sexuated identity. “This concentration of sadistic omnipotence in the penis is of fundamental importance for the masculine position of the boy.”⁷ From this point of view, narcissism and masculinity go hand in glove; one can easily understand how one cannot waver without threatening the other.

The idea of a primordial femininity confers all its complexity upon the castration anxiety that cannot be contained in the intra-psychical process. Moreover, it is interesting to note how the question of femininity opens the way to the inter-subjective standpoint which, as we know, is seldom present in Freudian thought. At the end of his text on the different facets of the castration complex in women, Abraham contributes two considerations that extend the Freudian idea of female ambivalence with regard to the male organ.⁸ The first bears on the influence that maternal castration complex can produce on the complex of the children, in particular the importance of a maternal figure behind which the castrating woman stands

concealed in complex fashion: the anal mother. The mother's over-investment of anal eroticism is only equaled by her strong attitude of rejection towards the male sexual organ: her excessive interest in the anal region and defecation contrasts with her avoidance of touching and naming the genital organ. This "chronic influence" of the mother's castration complex is, according to Abraham, decisive for the genesis of castration anxiety, much more so than the "occasional" threats of castration. Some men's misogyny – the fact of being quick to criticize excessively "women's weaknesses" – takes root in a male narcissism that has been hindered in two respects: by the mother's hold over his bodily functions and by her counter-investment of childhood genital eroticism.

Abraham's second consideration concerns the existence of an "intense passive female desire" that is frequently concealed behind a need for narcissistic overcompensation that can be ascertained in both sexes. When we look closely at various observations of castration fantasies, we must recognize, says Abraham, that some of them, notably those of biting, testify as much to the regressive satisfaction of the feminine aim – the "desired reception"⁹ of the male organ – as to any castrating wish. Still, even though neither the nature nor the source of this passive female motion are specified, there emerges from it the idea of a femininity that is as much desired as it is execrated.

One curious item is that it is within the setting of male sexual evolution that Freud meets a powerful illustration of the figure of a desired femininity that the development on castration does not manage to contain: the analysis of the Wolf Man. On first approach, the homosexual love that this "little stray" harbors for his father seems to come up against the narcissistic genital libido that comes into conflict with the passive sexual aim: *you want to be satisfied by your father, and so you will have to be castrated as was your mother*. However, on closer inspection, says Freud, narcissistic masculinity is not the sole motive force behind the repression: "The homosexual attitude [...] was of such

overwhelming intensity that the little boy's ego found itself unable to cope with it and so defended itself against it by the process of repression. The narcissistic masculinity which attached to his genitals, being opposed to the homosexual attitude, was drawn in, in order to assist the ego in carrying out the task".¹⁰ It is therefore the drive's passivity, overwhelming the ego, which draws in the feminine aim as it falls away. "His deepest sexual current, which had already been precipitated in the form of unconscious homosexuality"¹¹ retreated into intestinal symptomatology.¹² This secret and regressive identification with his mother was maintained at the cost of a "sick woman" who, just like the maternal figure, "could not go on living like that".¹³

The idea of an intimate link between passivity and femininity runs through the entire Freudian corpus as a kind of tension while remaining in a fragmentary state. For example, one passage from "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" points up the maternal seduction that wreaks havoc on her young son: "by the too early maturing of his erotism, [she] robbed him of a part of his masculinity."¹⁴ Extending this intuition of Freud's, which was confined to the margins of phallogentric theory, and examining it in light of Laplanche's "general theory of seduction"¹⁵, Jacques André makes a case for the complicity between the child's original position of passivity faced with the adult world and the female genital position.¹⁶

In his state of physical and psychical powerlessness the child is submitted to the intrusion of unconscious adult sexuality which interferes with care-giving. Since these first sexual experiences fundamentally outstrip his capacity for psychical elaboration, they are experienced passively and entail a dimension of forced excitation which is inevitably traumatic. To conjoin jouissance and penetration, the female genital position constitutes a first privileged representation of the original passivity: "The intrusion of sexuality in the child's psychosoma readily takes the route of the orifices (mouth, anus) for both sexes. This

intrusion in some way finds confirmation retroactively in female genital representation (or in anal identification in men). For a woman, the penetration of her body follows on from the intromissions of childhood. It reproduces their pleasure or their trauma, depending on her particular history”.¹⁷

To maintain such a fundamental affinity with the original patterns of libidinal satisfaction, the female aim of the drive also lends itself to the most profound repression; as a kind of limit to representation, it can not only be incompatible with narcissistic masculinity, but can also exceed the ego’s capacities for binding, even as the narcissistic base is being constituted or losing its solidity. Thus, with a gnawing pain invading his seriously ill body and pushed despite himself to groan and whimper, one patient expresses his feeling of shame as follows: “only you women can suffer honorably”.

No doubt it is the case of Schreber that gives the most dramatic measure of this twofold aspect of the archaic femininity that is both binding *a minima* and excessive in its intimate relationship with the libidinal body. His “radiant” femininity is the narcissistic delusional version of “rotten” femininity. This goes “against the way of the world”, not only because it implies castration, but above all because it implies a return to masochistic anal passivity. As Chasseguet-Smirgel notes¹⁸, in the Schreberian universe, to be a woman is to be a piece of shit, given how Schreber’s delusion multiplies, in its initial hypochondriacal dimension, the references to the body’s fecalization associated with the sense of extreme distress.¹⁹ A number of the Post-Freudian authors concur, however, in supposing that one can see in the delusion of feminization an attempt at an elaboration of the experience of the inner body which is threatened with destruction. But the delusional reconstruction bearing on the female position with regard to the father seals its powerlessness faced with the excesses of the sadistic anal persecution.

In the Wolf Man, the integration of the feminine trend is carried out when he is a “sick woman”

or “mistreated woman”: a figure that, in the way of a spanking fantasy, condenses desire and punishment; in Schreber, it exacts a much higher price, that of being a “deluded woman”. He has to be “God’s wife” through whom the new race of humanity will come to be.

Besides its ever-renewed impossibility, the feminine identification in evidence in both the Schreber case and the Wolf Man highlights an unshakeable fixation on the seducing paternal figure that is sadistic and even persecutory, and that has been superposed onto the father of prohibition. The maternal figure only seems to be present as a passive object with which the child identifies and not as the object of Oedipal love, nor as the object of a primary bond. The libidinal force attached to the female position is only equaled by the resistance that the fixation on the father of the primal scene opposes to the work of its identificatory resolution. What is it in this homosexual bond with the father that resists the development that transforms “having” into “being like”?

As we know, the boy’s identification with the Oedipal father leads, amongst other things, to his assumption of his socially prescribed sex. Moreover, it is the logical constraint of identification – one only identifies with the love object – that leads Freud to accept that the boy’s feminine position towards his father is an integral part of the Oedipus complex.²⁰

Would this mean that the reinforcement of the boy’s masculinity would result only from the identification with the feminine object of his desire? By insisting on the childhood femininity which is correlative to the original passivity and which develops it, wouldn’t this amount to considering any psychosexual evolution of the boy as a reaction-formation in relation to this passive feminine trend? In this regard, note that the case of the Wolf Man shows very well the rigidity and fragility of the identification with the father, which is the sole heir to the passive feminine desire for the father and reacts to castration anxiety. In Freud’s patient, feminine identification and masculine identification – whose tuning Freud underlines on the way out

of the Oedipus complex – tend to cancel each other out.

Observing in some male psychosexual evolutions a fixation on the paternal figure that is highly laden with ambivalence and on the maternal figure considered uniquely in its passive stance, we may wonder whether the passive homosexual bond for the father is not as much a part of the pre-Oedipal period as the Oedipal problematic itself. If there is an Oedipus complex, one might say that it is as much a question of its *engagement* as its *disengagement*. In other words, would it not be around the passive feminine aspiration for the father that the stakes in the bond with the primary object are played out and developed afresh? Would it not be the shadow of the phallic-active maternal imago that an intense fixation on the sadistic and intrusive paternal figure strives to banish? It is not rare for the moment at which one becomes the father of a son to constitute a retroaction that reactivates this maternal imago that lay hidden behind an idealized mother.

Father, What Do You Want to Say (to Me)?: Paternity and Femininity

“I was never the son of my father, so how can I become a father?” Léony’s nagging idea could have been lent to his father. Born after the sudden death of his father (Léony’s grandfather), Léony’s father was raised by a mother whom Léony describes as a harsh and authoritarian woman. The circumstances and the cause of the paternal grandfather’s death are still a taboo subject, a shameful secret than cannot be unlocked. “He vanished just like that, without leaving a trace, not even a grave”, says Léony, afraid that he might be destined to the same fate. This fear is associated with the figure of his dreaded grandmother to whom his father showed great submission.

Freud says that turning from the mother to the father seals the triumph of “intellectuality”, of “inference” over the “evidence of the senses” that proves maternity.²¹ The hypothesis of a childhood femininity that is correlative with the

original passivity and which develops it leads us to underline the passive homosexual bond to the father in what this bond represents in terms of a path towards the disengagement and reengagement of the bond with the primary object, or more precisely, with the formidable and stimulating figure of the “combined parent”.

Without being supported by the Oedipal dynamic, it may happen that the father simply replaces the mother and the homosexual bond linking the son to the father becomes frozen into the status of heir to the primary masochistic fantasies, thus running the risk of confusion between maternal and paternal imagos. The massively intrusive and persecutory paternal attitude runs the risk of hindering the filial/identificatory development of the passive homosexual components: it likewise tends to exacerbate the child’s ambivalence by fixing the child either in a masochistic position or in a position of “double narcissism” at a “psychoticising” level. In the latter case, the child is taken for both the battlefield and the warhorse, as is borne out by President Schreber’s mortifying position, assigned to him by his father.

A number of studies have turned their interest to the relation between the figure of Schreber’s father, an illustrious doctor and educationalist, and the son’s delusion of feminization. A paternal figure emerges that is marked by a duplicity mixing seduction and persecution to an extreme degree. President Schreber was raised in an educative climate dominated by the worship of systematized and caricatural virility that the father imposed on his children by means of moral and physical coercion. The father’s educative procedures are singled out as much by their penetrating severity as their arbitrary and paradoxical nature, destroying the structuring effect that is otherwise inherent to prohibition. As we know, these procedures led Schreber to adopt a feminine masochistic attitude towards him, even though they set out to eradicate such an attitude.

The hold of Schreber *père* extends to all domains and all aspects of the feeding and

upbringing of his children, to such an extent that some authors have seen this as an “usurpation of the maternal role” or an invasion of the mother’s function.²² This paternal interference in the mother-child relation incontestably reflects the pathology of Schreber *père*, but what it strives to combat cannot be reduced thereto and may give rise to an inverse strategy, namely a phobic flight faced with the mother/child relationship, or even faced with a maternity to come. Whether flight or interference, these are radical defensive responses against a series or more or less profound motions that the paternal confrontation with the mother/child inevitably runs the risk of awakening. In particular, one might try to consider these responses from the angle of the impact these motions can produce on the father/son relationship.

At the level of the Oedipus complex, this is jealousy against the rival, reactivated by the privilege the child enjoys – above all the son – in the mother’s psyche. These re-emergent Oedipal hostilities can lead one to fear, by means of a projective mechanism, reprisals from the son.

At the more archaic level, access to paternity revives issues that are complex in a different way and their guiding thread is traced out by the question of femininity. Freud always considered the fantasy of pregnancy in the boy to be a product of his passive homosexual desire for the father: to receive a child is the heir of the desire to be penetrated by the father.²³ It follows that the time of his partner’s pregnancy constitutes one of the moments at which the problematic of femininity opens afresh for the man: this feminine and homosexual tendency, whether a desire for a child or an imaginary desire for impregnation by his own father, is a paternal secret”, notes Monique Bydlowski, “grounded in the body of the woman that the man impregnates.”²⁴ The fantasy of male pregnancy may translate into psychosomatic disturbances that affect notably the gastrointestinal spheres.

Anthropological studies on the ritual of “sympathetic pregnancy” shed light on the

importance of one point that strikes us as being crucial for the assumption of paternity: in this ritual, the man lies down beside his child and receives compliments from visitors; thus, the father replaces the mother and child with a view to warding off his unconscious hostility towards the newly formed dyad.²⁵ What is it in the mother/child relationship that provokes this hostility? There can be no doubt that the revived Oedipal conflict heralds the ritual. But is it the only unconscious mainspring? Were we to insist solely on the Oedipus complex, we would fail to spot that the mother/child relationship, notably its prototype which is the breast-feeding stage, entails a dimension that is stimulating and even worrying.²⁶

Let us come back for a moment to the Sphinx father *par excellence* of Schreber *père*. His knowledge of educative measures allows one to make interesting hypotheses with regard to the paternal ambivalence towards the mother/child duo. Doctor Schreber seemed to harbor both a secret desire and a powerful fear of the maternal breast, which generated his sadistic desire for control over the (breast) feeding of his children. He is thought to have perceived, notes Jacqueline Lanouzière²⁷, that the nursing organ, the maternal breast, is also the organ that corrupts. Rather than a “perception”, this is in our view a complex sense that has been reactivated by the view of the feeding/caring mother. Lanouzière underlines a twofold effect that the observation of the scene of breast-feeding produces on the child-spectator, in this case Schreber *fils*: as a spectacle that has been offered to view, the spectacle of a mother giving care or giving her breast to another infant provokes a stimulus that is alike to the excitation provoked by the contact with the mother’s body and the fact of breaking away from it; in view of the identificatory duplication it offers, it also has a retroactive organizing effect on the fragmentary content that results from the first care relations that are submitted to passively.²⁸ But, prior to Schreber *fils* fascinated by the scene of breast-feeding he observes, there stands Schreber *père*

confronted with the dissymmetrical dyadic relation that reactivates the active and passivating maternal figure.

For those fathers in whom the question of femininity mobilizes a reactive narcissistic over-investment, the reactivation of the active and passivating maternal figure can exacerbate the projection of all female desire. By dint of the fact that this female desire finds itself reinforced by an identification with the child's passive position, in particular the boy's passive position, it is not rare for the child in question to become the support of paternal projection; thus hemmed into the position of the father's phobogenic object, the child runs the risk of

suffering from the paternal hold. Now, this hold turns out to be the imprint of a sadistic and anal identification with a maternal imago and contributes to the confusion between the maternal imago and the paternal imago, united in their "penetrating" aspect.

The result is a passive and over-stimulated homosexual position, fed by the paternal attitude which dictates hatred of all passivity and anything that is capable of evoking it. An object of paradoxical paternal investment, femininity in the son can thus become hard to negotiate, unless by a masochistic fixation and/or the projection that maintains engaged cross-generational repetition.

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¹Freud, S. (2002). Analysis Terminable and Interminable. *Wild Analysis*, translated by Alan Bance, Penguin Books, p. 204-7.

²Freud, S. (1991). Lecture 33: Femininity. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, translated by James Strachey, *Penguin Freud Library Vol. II*, Penguin Books Ltd: Harmondsworth, p.162: "In this way the ancient masculine wish for the possession of a penis is still faintly visible through the femininity now achieved. But perhaps we ought rather to recognize this wish for a penis as being *par excellence* a feminine one."

³[Translator's note: Lacan contrasts the definite and indefinite articles in drawing an opposition between *une femme* and *La femme*. *La femme* does not exist because there is no all-encompassing essence of Womanhood. This point is less forcefully rendered in English by "The Woman doesn't exist". See Bruce Fink's footnote 28 to his translation of (1998). *The Seminar Book XX, Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*, New York/London: Norton & Co., p. 7.]

⁴Quotation from Quignard, P. (1994). *Le sexe et l'effroi*. Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, p. 118.

⁵The condemnation of female sexuality in the particularly atrocious form of infibulation practiced in some African tribes seems to owe its origin to this problematic of a double opening of the female body. I shall cite a case reported by a colleague who worked with African patients: a young woman who was a victim of this custom of suturing is now suffering from a serious anorexia and walled up in an impenetrable silence. It turned out that, "sewn up" and "fastened" – to use the local expression – she was still unprotected from an anal rape committed by an uncle, who furthermore had contracted Aids. Broken into in such a violent way, body and psyche seem to have sought refuge in the condemnation of any opening: nothing must come in, nothing must come out...

⁶Klein, M., "The Effects of Early Anxiety-Situations on the Sexual Development of the Boy" in *The Psycho-Analysis of Children*, London: Hogarth Press, 1932, p. 340.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁸Abraham, K. (1954). Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. III, (1922), p.1-29; re-printed in *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*, New York: Basic Books, p. 338-369.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰Freud, S. (1991). From the History of an Infantile Neurosis, translated by Alix Strachey & James Strachey in *Penguin Freud Library Vol. IX, Case Histories II*, Penguin, p. 353.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 358.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 356.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 313-4.

¹⁴Freud, S. (1991). Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood, translated by James Strachey in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XI (1910). *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Leonardo da Vinci*

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¹⁵Laplanche, J. (1989). *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, translated by David Macey, Cambridge MA / Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

¹⁶André, J. (1995). *Aux origines féminines de la sexualité*. Paris: PUF.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁸Chasseguet Smirgel, J. (1988). On President Schreber's Transsexual Delusion" in D. B. Allison, & S. Tomaselli (Eds.), *Psychosis and Sexual Identity: Toward a Post-Analytic View of the Schreber Case*, Albany: Suny, p. 155-68.

¹⁹Schreber, quoted in Freud, S. Psychoanalytical Notes on an Autobiographical Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides), p. 149: "[...] but my body [...] was to be transformed into a female body, and as such surrendered to the person in question with a view to sexual abuse, and was then simply to be 'left on one side' – that is to say, no doubt, given over to corruption" [Tr].

²⁰Freud, S. (1991). The Ego and the Id, translated by Joan Riviere & James Strachey. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological World of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX (1923-1925) *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, Hogarth Press; repinted in *The Penguin Freud Library*, Vol XI, *On Metapsychology*, Penguin Books Ltd: Harmondsworth, p. 371-2.

²¹Freud, S. (1990). *Moses and Montheism; Three Essays*, translated by J. Strachey in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXIII (1937-1939) *An Outline of Psychoanalysis and Other Works*, Hogarth Press: London; repinted in *Penguin Freud Library Vol. XIII, The Origins of Religion*, Penguin Books Ltd: Harmondsworth, p. 360-1.

²²White, R. B. (1961). The Mother Conflict in Schreber's Psychosis. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Issue No. 42, p. 71-2; Dupeu, J. M. (1994). Le père - Maître : de J. J. Rousseau à Schreber. *Psychanalyse à l'université*, 10, 75, p. 72

²³Freud, S.. A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis" translated by James Strachey in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX, London: Hogarth Press, p. 91-2: "Among the observations made by psycho-analysis of the mental life of children there is scarcely one which sounds so repugnant and unbelievable to a normal adult as that of a boy's feminine attitude to his father and the phantasy of pregnancy that arises from it. It is only since Senatspräsident Daniel Paul Schreber [...] that we can discuss the subject without trepidation or apology."

²⁴Bydlowski, M. (1997). *La dette de vie*. Paris: PUF, coll. Le fil rouge, p. 103.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁶ According to a joint study by R. J. Stoller and G. H. Herdt, post partum taboos in the Sambia, a tribe from New Guinea, which forbid any physical and visual contact between the father and the mother and child, stem in part from the fear of sexual stimulation that would arise from viewing the act of breast feeding. Stoller, R. J., &

Herdt, G. H. (1982). The Development of Masculinity: A Cross - Cultural Contribution. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Issue 30.

²⁷ Lanouzière, J. (1990). Schreber et le sein. *Psychanalyse à l'université*. Paris: PUF, Tome 15, No. 57, p. 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43-44.

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Electronic reference:

Mi-Kyung Yi, "The Impasse of Femininity: A Paternal Heritage", *Research in Psychoanalysis* [Online], 14 | 2012, published Dec. 28, 2012.

This article is a translation of *L'impasse du féminin : un héritage paternel ?*

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