

The remains of the first love. Unresolved bereavement and the selection of romantic partner

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Abstract

The mother, the first object of love in our lives, is the person that gradually introduces the child to the world of meaning, thought and intersubjective communication. Through early emotional conversations (a kind of ongoing co-creative dialogue), the mother and the infant author the infant's experienced story. But what happens when a bond as important as this, is disrupted by a threatening illness in a crucial developmental phase like adolescence?

Through the presentation of clinical material, we will investigate how the mother's illness and subsequent death during her daughter's adolescence can complicate the young girl's journey of discovering herself, contribute to pre-oedipal fixations and influence her sexual selection of object.

Key words: unresolved bereavement, oedipal, sexual identity

Introduction

«In the beginning the light
And the first hour when lips still in clay try out the
things of the world»

Odysseus Elytis
«Axion Esti»

The first object of love in our life is our mother. Françoise Dolto (1988) uses the term *aimance* (*aimer* = to love and *aimant* = magnet) to illustrate how the mother is for her baby – through her face, her function, her body, her gaze, and her

gestures – an object of total magnetising love and traction. She is the person that gradually introduces the child to the world of meaning, thought, and intersubjective communication, thus setting the foundations of its internal world and the continuation of its existence. Like «some notes of music become after the third or fourth note a melody» (Stern, 2004 in Mellier, 2004, p.5) the mother connects every emotional «note» of the baby, weaving the psychological unity of the experience within the intersubjective time. Through early emotional conversations (a kind of ongoing co-creative dialogue), the mother and the infant author the infant's experienced story (Stern, 1985, 1995, 2004).

Initially, both boys and girls exist in a phase of symbiosis and interaction with their primary object, and form their identity based on the early relationship and interaction with it. It is, of course, worth noting that more recent neuroscientific findings and research projects on the interaction between mothers and infants, have refuted the old standard concept, which conceived the infant only as a passive recipient of maternal care. Instead the evidence points to the infant's active interaction with its mother from birth, as well as to the infant's ability for intersubjectivity (Brazelton, 1979, Stern, 2004, Trevathen et al., 2001).

The first relation is at the same time identification. It includes the recognition of the primary bond, as well as the respect of the baby's autonomy. It also includes the deep melancholy for the innate separation of mother and baby, which is registered in the foundation of existence itself (Manolopoulos, 2019). The eternal loss of the initial relation, where the infant enjoyed the heaven that is non-differentiation, leaves a trace of nostalgia on the adult person's psyche.

The crossing to the oedipal phase, which is expected to stabilize sexual identity, depends on the ability to differentiate, on a stable self-image and on a relatively solid nuclear identity. It also requires an ability to manage one's aggressive impulses and subsequent guilt, which are expected to escalate during the oedipal conflict. Experience shows that threatened contact with oedipal type stressors indicates early deficits, ambiguities and fluidity in gender identity, or is connected with psychological regression to the selection of an object of the same sex (Isakidou, 2016).

For the boy, its mother was and remains the first object of love. For the girl, however, matters are more complicated. On the one hand, the girl is required to identify with her mother in order to become a woman, while on the other hand she is required to part with her. For the daughter, bereavement for the first object of love – namely the mother – is never concluded definitively. As Eva melancholically declares in Bergman's *Autumn Sonata*: mother and daughter are a story that will never end. Especially during adolescence the fight for autonomy and differentiation from the mother reaches its peak, and the process

becomes all the more complicated because of the same sex and the revival of the oedipal complex.

Through the presentation of clinical material, we will investigate what happens when an illness that is threatening to the mother's life coincides with the daughter's adolescent years, as well as how the mother's death leaves the girl with a sense of incompleteness, thus complicating her journey to find herself.

Clinical vignette: The story of Eve

Eve is a 28 year old girl that has yet to finish her studies (only a few courses shy of getting her degree). She also works, providing creative entertainment for children at their homes.

Eve lost her mother to cancer when she was 21 years old. Her mother was then 57. She first developed breast cancer, when Eve was 14, which later on spread elsewhere and resulted in her dying after seven years of battling the disease. It is worth noting that Eve's maternal grandmother also died of ovarian cancer when Eve was a baby.

Eve had an especially close relationship with her mother. She describes her as a strong, smiling, organizing, giving, person of duty that lived her life for others and through others. Her father is portrayed as spontaneous, impulsive, creative but not good at organising and scheduling. He is described as orbital to the family. He was absent from home a lot, due to work, and also because he probably had extramarital affairs. Eve characteristically commented that her mother was a home person, while her father was an exploration person. They met when her mother was 35 years old and her father 29 and soon got married because of the pregnancy.

Eve visited the Family Therapy Unit with the request to explore a romantic relationship she had engaged in with Ariadne who was 37. She wishes to be with her, but realises she was never sexually attracted to women. And whereas Ariadne is homosexual, she herself does not identify as one. Concerning her choice of partner she says that it did not matter that Ariadne is a woman but that she is a person. As she commented in the first session «I delete gender, I am attracted to the person. I describe myself an open-minded heterosexual».

In the past, Eve has had some romantic relationships with boys, which were however short-lived. She admits that she seems to find in Ariadne things that she used to get from her mother and she now misses. It is a tender relationship, in which she finds comfort, love and care. It gives her food for thought, they have nice conversations and they share common interests. For Eve the

important thing in the relationship is communication. She admits that she would want Ariadne to be a man. Or maybe not. She doesn't know. She is confused.

She realised later on in a session that when she started her relationship with Ariadne she was the same age as her mother when she gave birth to her, she was 36 years old.

In the first sessions she admits that she cannot remember how it was before her mother died. It is as if she has always been «without her mother». As if she has forgotten her. I listen to her difficulty to talk about the past, to recall memories of her mother, of life in her parents' home and generally to retrieve emotional material. «Without her mother» is a way to fool herself. To bypass bereavement, to ease the pain of «she is not here now». As Kiki Dimoula writes in her unique way, «Memory proper noun of sorrows, in singular only in singular and indeclinable. Memory, memory, memory».

When we talk about her mother, during our sessions, her eyes always water-up. She admits: «I only cry here... I don't feel pain, it is as if a tap is turned on. It is as if the fact that mom died concerns somebody else. I forget about her in my everyday life».

I ask her: «If you could give words to your tears, what would they say?» And she replies: «I have no words. There is no mind yet. Tears just happen to fall... I cannot decode the reason for which they fall. No words that I could find would have the meaning that I would want. I say I miss her... but it is not just that... Everything has sank in a long-winded silence, everything is still. A prolonged quietness, time standing still».

As Simon Critchley writes (2016, p.86): «The weeks after my mother died, I read a lot about grief, at least as much as my limited powers of concentration allowed me. But the only person that seemed to feel the same as me was the English poet Denise Riley (2012), who had written a kind of specific chronicle of the effects of her son's death... After my mother died I acquired a very clear sense of the reality of time, almost as if I was gazing at it, as if I was trapped in the present and I only hoped that it would pass. According to Riley the deceased gives us a grip on the present moment to which we have entered. We are installed in the present and that is not going to retreat... Time has seized us. And this very carnal sense of time that has lost its flow, is not experienced through fear and trembling, but with what Riley calls «crystal simplicity»... The intuitive flow of intuitive time has been suddenly drained. You now live in a shadeless purity of bright and dry air».

Eve does not remember much about life with her mother, she does not have a story about her. It is like a silent movie. As if she does not remember what they talked about. It is difficult for her to put things from the past into words. A silent

pain that was never narrated. Mourning for the loss of her mother remained unresolved, incomplete.

Let us remember Virginia Woolf, who lost her mother when she was thirteen. Everything she wrote about her mother's life was characterised by vagueness and questions. «If I turn to my mother, how difficult it is to single her out as she really was; to imagine what she was thinking, to put a single sentence into her mouth» (1986, p.87). «The tragedy of her death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal; and us solemn, and self-conscious. We were made to act parts that we did not feel; to fumble for words that we did not know. It obscured, it dulled» (1986, p.95).

Eve's mother died in the summer. Eve had come back from studying to take care of her. She had felt the terror of death when her mother had apneas. She remembers her exhausted in bed... in a lot of pain. She massaged her. She would tell herself, «If that is how she'll be, it is better that she dies» and afterwards she would feel guilty. She realised that death was coming soon and she would think to herself «it is going to happen now», then she would convince herself it was not going to happen that way. She had fear for what was to come. When her mother died she was by her side. After her mother's death the fear was gone. She was relieved. There was a sudden quiet, like things fell into place. The night her mother died she painted her fingernails red. She was concerned, as she said, of how other people would see her. She wanted to look good. On the day of her mother's funeral she ran a fever. She never wore black as an act of defiance. Black reminded her of what had happened, and she didn't want that. She wore red. She wore a multicolored pair of trousers – green, yellow, red – and a red top. If somebody saw her from a distance it would seem as though she was on fire. She did not want people feeling sorry for her. She wanted to go against death. A kind of manic defense. After the burial the fever subsided. For the rest of the summer she travelled around Greece. She felt liberated because she was exhausted from caring for her mother.

At this point we understand that Eve has come into therapy to cope with «the black» she has left behind. To deal with mourning her mother, to put it into words.

Eve's dreams

Dream means there are no borders nor their stern suspicious guards.

Kiki Dimoula

Eve gradually brings her dreams into the sessions. We could categorise them into three groups. In the first group of dreams her mother lives far away, she is not dead. In the second group her mother is in the place where they lived, and in the third one the father appears.

Let us begin with the first group of dreams.

First dream: «I saw my mother, she was somewhere far away, I think New York, and she didn't want to come and find me».

Second dream: «my mother is somewhere closer (compared to New York) but she cannot contact me».

She comments that in her dream she wonders whether it is her fault that her mother has gone away, and then she seems to accept that it is her mother's decision to move away. It is enough for her to at least see her. At this point we would say that, quite possibly, her guilt for the loss of her mother conceals anger towards her for dying too soon, for leaving her, for abandoning her on her own. Seeing that «mother lives elsewhere» eases the pain of definitive, irreversible loss. Loss is final, but absence is a potential presence, a promise of returning.

Third dream: «I was in a place, I don't remember where, and I was trying to find my mother. Somehow, I don't remember how, we found one another and she told me "you have my number why haven't you called me?"». Then she woke up.

She says that when she wakes up she is glad that she has seen her mother in her sleep. She misses having contact with her. She cries when we talk about her mother. She realises that the joy of meeting her is in the dream and not in reality.

Fourth dream: « I saw a lady that looked like my mother... I saw her from a distance and thought she was my mom...».

She reports that sometimes, when she is outside, she might see a woman that resembles her mother. She turns her head, looks at her again and says it's my mom.

I comment that a part of her realises that her mother has died, while another part of her deceives her by acting like it hasn't happened. Like children that play in order to make reality bearable, Eve also plays with her mother's presence and absence in order to ease the pain of her loss.

It reminds us of Freud's grandson that threw and retrieved a spool – that represented the mother – with a string attached to it. I saw her, I didn't see her. She exists, she does not exist. She died, she didn't die. She lives someplace else. Her psyche filled-up with divisions and contradictions.

The only place where she talks about her mother is the therapist's office. According to her, she is afraid of her emotion as if it is going to suck her in. «If you touch it you are not going to recover», she comments.

In one of the next sessions she brought old photos. She remembered moments. She distinguished the difference between the time before her mother's illness and the time after it, which is something she could not do while her mother was still alive. She mentioned that she was angry at her mother when she realised that she was not doing well. She remembered the sound of her voice when she was hospitalised, two months before she died. At night-time she often slept by her side. One time Eve was sore and made a face. Her mother asked her «what's wrong dear?». She is emotional. This voice reminds her of the loss of attention and concern from her mother towards her because of her illness. In the end, when her mother's health was failing, all concern was concentrated on her. Eve remembers being very tired and telling herself that if things were to continue this way, it would be better if her mother died.

Her adolescence was overwhelmed by her mother's illness. Instead of rebelling against her parents she had to undertake responsibilities and manage a number of practical matters in the house. She remembers telling herself not to upset her mother, because she had read somewhere that cancer is a psychosomatic disease. In the course of the illness she even became her mother's mother a little bit, especially in the final stages.

She realises that maybe she went through adolescence later, when for instance she delayed getting her degree. She kept telling herself: «now that you are not around I'll get it whenever I want to. I will do what I want». Her mother symbolised the boundaries and made her face her responsibilities. When she died the boundaries were gone. Recently, in an internal dialogue, she even heard her mother's voice telling her «get on with it, you have delayed getting your degree for far too long...».

Moreover, her mother's untimely death left her with gaps and voids regarding her story. She realises that she knew her mother through her role and not as person. She does not know a lot about her life. She never met her maternal

grandparents because they were dead. She only knows that her mother was very close to her own mother, who died when Eve was four months old, and that she had a distant, difficult relationship with her father, who was pathologically jealous of his wife and very controlling and despotic towards his three daughters. Relatively recently Eve found out, through her father, something that she had only in parts heard from her mother. Eve's mother had left home when she was in the second year of high school, for reasons that were unknown. She lived for a year with family friends. Eve's father commented that his wife had a confrontational relationship with her father. A friend of her mother's was reluctant to talk to her about it. She told her: «I don't know whether your mom would want you to know».

Fifth dream: «I see my mom. I don't remember where she is, probably in our house. She is alive again. In the dream I also see you (the therapist) telling me to stop being mischievous... to stop seeing her... since she is dead».

The repetition of the mother's presence in the dreams («alive again») creates a sense of continuity that contradicts the discontinuity brought on by her death. As Neimeyer (2006) points out, a very important aspect of bereavement is the experience of disruption in our sense of organising ourselves, through the loss of the relationship with the deceased. It is the relationship that played a role in how we perceived and identified ourselves. Through the process of grief, the person tries to restore the consistency in the narration of his life that has been disrupted through the experience of loss. Every important death and the separation that it implies, involves a violent abduction, as a part of ourselves disappears. When the person is lost, that part is lost with him. The word bereavement, in essence, describes the state of deprivation. We are deprived from the living presence of the person we loved. As we realise that our life can never go back to what it was before we experienced the loss, we search for a new direction and cause in our life. We struggle to restructure an identity that will include the new circumstances brought on by the loss, while simultaneously retaining a sense of continuity between the past and the future (see also Thanopoulou, 2014).

We will next focus on the second group of dreams.

First dream: «Mom was in the village, sick with short white hair. Ariadne's mother was also there and they were discussing what my mother would plant in the garden». Then she saw myself talking to the mother about the garden.

Eve commented that everything about the dream was normal. There was no sense of her mother having left (like in the previous dreams) or that she had died. The illness, however, was there.

Second dream: «I was in the house in the town where we had moved when we left the village. Mother was dead and I was tidying up. It was a long time after her death. There was a garden, a cat and a dog. I wanted to make a change in the house. Unexpectedly, I found money that my mother had left for the bills maybe. For a bill that had not been payed».

As we discuss the dream she recalls something. The place where she found the money was the place where she used to sit and talk with her mother. She would tell her news from school while her mother was in the kitchen doing the washing-up. An everyday activity that came to an end with her mother's illness.

I wonder and ask: «What has been left unpaid? What has been left unfulfilled»? Eve did not have the sense of an unfulfilled debt, but a sense of urgency to make the change to the house.

Around that time Eve had to visit the place where she had spent her childhood, due to a suicide in her extended social group. In the session following her return, she reported that she felt being present in a tragic moment that this time was experienced by others. She felt connected to the place and found it difficult to leave. The weather was stuffy and it was unbearably hot, like it was at her mother's funeral. For the first time after her mother's death, she found herself on her parents' home patio. When her mother was sick, Eve used to sit there and paint her nails or smoke. They had also hired a lady back then to help with her mother. She recalls that every time the lady came she would go to the balcony as if leaving her mother's care and concern to somebody else. It was as if she was closing the door on the illness, and walking out into life. The last year before her mother's death she was very involved in her care. She was living life constantly asking herself what she could do to extend her mother's life or to prevent death. She had buried her emotions as if there was no place for them. She compared what she went through to being stuck in an elevator and not having time to get scared.

She realises that, this time, going back home she connected with the day of her mother's funeral in a different way. Back then she had avoided pain and sadness. Now, she felt more in touch with the sadness for the loss of her mother. She wonders how many episodes of her life her mother has missed. Herself as well. With her mother's death she lost her carelessness as well as the continuation of their relationship. She carries the relationship as it was then. Unfortunately it did not have time to evolve. It ended abruptly with her death. There are so many things she didn't ask, or didn't learn about her mother. The loss of her mother made her feel alone with a big void that she slowly got used to. She remembers that the day her mother drew her last breath was strangely quiet. The only sound she could describe was like hearing your own heartbeat, and then a monotonous, continuous sound. A sound of silence, of death, of

emptiness, of nothing. It was a silence that stopped life. The sounds of life could not be heard. This time, however, there was a tranquillity on the patio through which you could hear the rustling of the leaves and the chirping of the birds.

She also observed another change: It was the first time that she did not feel the need to restore the house to how her mother had left it. She arranged things in a way that served herself. She explains how, after her mother's death, it was as if she had taken her place. She had the impulsion to tidy-up the house the same way that her mother would. She would even frequently fight with her father about it. Every time she returned to the family home she fantasised of finding it as her mother had left it or as she herself would had left it.

Third dream: «Mother was in the village and then she left and I realised she was gone and I would go find her somewhere in Crete».

I comment: «Crete, Ariadne... labyrinth...» and we begin to unravel the ball of thread of her relationship with her partner, which ultimately leads to her mother. According to Eve, Ariadne is in love with her. She, on the other hand, is probably not. She submitted to her in order to receive affection and caresses. She struggles to find the right words, she is not sure. From the first moment together, she had the feeling that Ariadne understood her. Their relationship gives her security and serenity. It is her base, her constant, a relationship by which she is trying to replenish the void left behind by her mother's passing. She could quite easily end their sexual relationship if she could be sure that they would remain friends. Or maybe not, she is not sure. Ariadne on the other hand is adamant that she does not want her as a friend but as a romantic partner. For Eve, Ariadne, being almost ten years older than her, partly represents a maternal figure. She cannot imagine being with Ariadne if her mother was still alive. It seems as if her psyche found a way out from the great dependence on her prematurely lost mother: identifying with her, and selecting a partner on a narcissistic and reflective basis, requesting to be loved like she was loved by her mother. Maybe, through her relationship with Ariadne, she is seeking traces and remains of the first object of love, returning to the maternal place, the primary home, the maternal body, the first meaningful bond.

Her mother was the main presence in her life. She took care of everything. Eve was never daddy's little girl, only mommy's. For the first two and a half years of her life she lived with her mother in Athens while her father came and went. Then her mother was transferred to their village, where they lived until Eve was ten years old, at which point they moved to a bigger town so that she could get a better education. Also, all the descriptions she had from her mother about her younger years, involved herself with her own mother and her sisters. It was as if there was no father.

The exclusion of the father seems to also be repeated in Eve's story as well. According to her, he never had a paternal role. I ask her what role he did have, and she replies that he did not have a role but a shape. She forms a triangle with her fingers, and the father is in a corner. At this point she adds that she never wants to talk with her father about her mother. She admits that initially she was angry at her father, thinking he was responsible for her mother's illness. She believed that her mother had suspected that her husband was unfaithful and was sad or angry, which resulted in her getting sick. She has since changed her mind, but still holds a derogatory attitude towards him. She does not want to cry in front of him. She doesn't want to give him that, she says. She feels they are not on the same side. Like he did not love her mother the same way she did. It is only her that can be sad about her mother. As if she is telling him «what was she to you? She was my mother».

I comment: «The third party is excluded from conversing on the same terms».

We move on to the third group of dreams, which involves the father.

First dream: «It was Christmas in the village. (I had the feeling that) my mother had divorced my father and she had come to the village for the holidays. I was telling her "won't you also come to dad's celebration of his nameday?" And mother replied: "we will have to ask dad about that. I am not sure he wants that"».

Second dream: «It was mother, me and Ariadne in our house in the village». Father was travelling, not necessarily coming... maybe he had just left... she does not remember. There were clothes everywhere in the house. They were washing them, hanging them to dry, and ironing them. It was night-time and all the lights in the house were lit and there was restlessness. All the doors were open, same as the lights (as if there was a celebration). «At some point I found myself on the patio and we were discussing something, probably my relationship with Ariadne. There was stress and unrest. Then, I called dad on the phone, (as a child, whenever I called him, I always had a mental image of him driving, that's how I imagined him, being in the car and driving) but I don't remember if I talked to my mother or father first. In any case, I called him to tell him something, probably about Ariadne. And he said: "you should also tell your mother"». She comments that there was no negative reaction from either her mother or her father.

Associations regarding the dream... The room from which Eve called her father was her father's study. It was air conditioned so she often went there to rest when her mother was sick and she was caring for her. It is in that room that she painted her fingernails red, and practiced her mother's favourite song on the

violin, so she could play it at her funeral. She comments that «in the first dream father appears as a thought, and in the second one as a voice».

I contemplate that voice, speech resolves the symbiotic relationship of mother and child, and promotes separation. The father mediates the mother-daughter relationship facilitating the process of separation.

When the father appears, the child realises that identity is formed as a result of difference, and understands the difference between the two sexes, as well as exclusion and absence.

Eve mentions that when working with children, she used to tell them that their mother has set the rules and that she was there to enforce them (which is what she herself had experienced in her own family), but that lately she has also started mentioning the father as well.

Another association that Eve made regarding the dream has to do with the washing machine. Doing the laundry is one of the chores she prefers. She thinks it is easy. I comment: «Are you trying to clear something up»?

She replies: «you know, my dad became an adult when my mother died». «What do you mean»? I ask. She clarifies that her father learned how to do the laundry, how not to leave things unfinished, how to pay the bills. «So» I ask «are you also negotiating adulthood matters by doing the laundry»?

She smiles...

Let us note, at this point, that Eve's anger towards her father has eased a little bit. She finds him more acceptable. Recently, he unexpectedly visited her from the town where he lives, and although she had a busy schedule and was tired, she said that she will always make time for her father.

In a self-description exercise she was given, among other things, she wrote: «Eve's mother is dead, but her father lives in another town. He is relatively young». We could say that «young» may not refer to so much to age, but instead indicates a shift inside her, the father as a new presence in her life.

Third dream: «I was in the room that used to be my parents' bedroom. In the dream I was there with my mother. I was changing clothes, when suddenly a man, a stranger walked in, and I thought to myself: "I must tidy this room up, and decide what to do with these things. What stays and what goes"».

Fourth dream: «I was at my parents' house, as it was in the beginning, only very basic furniture. I had gone there to get some things. My dad was there... somewhat blurry, not so much as a presence, but as a sense» (she was not

sure if she really saw him). «Mom had died, that was a reality. I was looking through old photos and things in the closet. I did not live there. I would go through the things and then leave. Gradually, I realised that the house was like it was when mom died. Things were missing from the house and there were remains of my father's study (because he had a study in the house)». Her own room was empty from the time she had moved out to begin her studies.

The man-father figure seems somewhat vague, blurry. He is presented like a stranger. She describes how her mother had to do everything. Her father was like a teenager representing exploration and the joy of life.

I mention to her a male psychoanalyst, Bolognini (2009), who said that «every good father has to dance at least one waltz with his daughter, showing that he is moved and honoured by it». Eve admits that she avoids eye contact with her father. She mostly feels awkward around him. When she says that there is a tremble in her voice – she gets emotional – and adds: «I don't want to show my feelings. How vulnerable I sometimes may be». I ask: «what do you see in your father's eyes»? And she replies: «when one lets his guard down, and does not keep a distance, he will get hurt».

Most probably Eve still sees her father through her mother's eyes. She holds a childish stubbornness against him. «She does not want to give in to him» as she characteristically says. She holds the fact that he was not present in her life against him. She brings up a memory from when she was around six years old, where her father was leaving for work in the morning and she would tell him «good morning dad, and in case I don't see you good night as well». On the other hand she admits that there were some nice moments with him, when they would do things together.

From dyad to triad

There cannot be a couple that consists of only the mother and child. The child constitutes the image of the mother's union with the father. As mentioned by Skynner (1987), the definition of self, based on the two different persons – the mother and father – is possible in the same way that it is possible for a ship to define its position in the ocean, when it knows two points on the horizon.

Triad – the transition of dyadic to triadic relationships depends on two primary processes: the child's acceptance of the invariability of generations, and the recognition that children are excluded from the world adult sexuality. As the child learns that its parents have their own emotional life, from which it is excluded, it realises how generations are divided in its family and comprehends that for its parents he or she will always be a child (Heineman, 2006).

According to Britton (1998) every child grows up when it has internalised three basic facts of life. First, separation from its mother. Second, dependence on a good object. Third, the realisation that it comes from a fertile couple of parents who are in a sexual relationship from which the child itself is excluded. The primary family triangle supplies the child with two bonds that connect it with its two parents separately, and make it face the bond between them that excludes it. This gives a model of a «third kind» of relationship, where the child is a witness and not a participant. Thus, a third position is created, from which one can observe relationships, and at the same time imagine himself being the object of observation. Britton named the psychological freedom that this process offers «triangular space» (Britton, 1989). In essence, it is our ability to see ourselves interacting with others, and to be able to accept another point of view as possible, while retaining our own. To be able, that is, to be ourselves, while at the same time thinking about ourselves.

It is an especially important but also painful position for the child, to observe and to endure the special bond between its parents. To endure the jealousy and the fear of exclusion, while still continuing to feel loved by its parents. Later, coming into adulthood he or she will exclude himself from the parental couple in order to develop his own identity and form close relationships outside the family.

According to Bolognini (2009, p.2, Hellenic Psychoanalytic Society Bulletin) «The daughter needs to feel the father's admiration of her value as a woman, in order to be able to gently glide towards gradual separation, through the painful exit from the oedipal illusion. This is achieved when there is a loving father, who helps raising her, and hands her over, at the right moment, to the man who will be her true sexual partner in adult life».

Thus, a woman's identity is composed of many reflections. The girl first forms her sexuality through the close relationship with her mother, in order to be able to then move on to a relationship with the father and then with another man.

The psyche and sexuality are in a constant dialectic or confrontational search. In her book «The Many Faces of Eros», Joyce McDougal (1995) underlines the inherent traumatic nature of human sexuality. The traumatic dimension is connected to the realisation of the divergence and the discovery of the difference between the two sexes. The oedipal complex forces the child to realise that it is impossible to be both sexes, as well as to possess one of its parents.

Afterword

Memory again oblivion again. I constantly use the same words. And life, that windbag is ultimately satisfied with these two words, memory and oblivion

Kiki Dimoula

Winnicott asks what makes life worth living. Living and playing our experiences creatively in a transitional space – the third reality – where we struggle forever to connect internal and external reality. Ourselves and others. Companionship and loneliness. Music and silence. Existence and non-existence (personal communication with psychoanalyst Sotiris Manolopoulos).

Dreams are a means of expression that resembles the way that children express themselves through playing. It is a road that approaches archaic paths that only dreaming and playing can show us (Kalliteraki, 2016). In the game of fort-da, the child is holding the thread of return, of representation and divulgence (Rousillon, 2000). Though playing, the child actively repeats unpleasant experiences trying to dominate them. Dream telling is a “safe: way of expressing concerns and accompanying emotions that are left unnoticed and or warded off in waking. Dream stories are approached with no preconceptions regarding the meaning of metaphors, but with the aim to help the dreamer link dreams to current concerns and generate ideas on which aspects of his waking experience are not given voice in waking. (Androutsopoulou, 2011). According to Potamianou (2019) our dreams are “poetic” since they they work on the disappointments, with which reality inevitably provides us, moulding formations that discharge the psyche from tensions and offer everything that our desires seek. In dreams everything is possible. What has been lost is found again, what we have left behind encounters us... time moves between a past that does not fade and a present that cannot become past, since time is annulled, it does not exist (Potamianou, 2019).

Eve from our story, plays, through her dream material, like a small child, trying to make the reality of her beloved mother’s death sufferable. She plays with contradictory concepts like presence, absence, memory, oblivion, exist, does not exist, close, far, inside me, somewhere else, trying to build bridges between internal and external reality, between her living self and her dead mother and ultimately between her mother, her father and herself.

I will close with a favourite poem by Tasos Livadhitis titled «Motherhood»:

He often saw her in his sleep, (for years now, my dead mother),

and always that strange dream: the halfway dark room,
 like then, the quiet conversations by the coffin, and the flickering flames of the
 candles
 as it came in through the open door silently
 the great night. Everything the same. Only She
 was not the same (oh mother) – I mean she was no longer alone, for next to
 her, in another coffin,
 her again, the same beloved face
 twice dead, those same hands that forgave everything, crossed
 twice, two identical mothers, laying in two coffins –
 as if her the vast, overflowing motherhood
 that had made her live countless lives
 could not fit now in just
 one death.

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