The author discusses the arguments in favour of an Electra rather than an Oedipus complex to describe the vicissitudes of female development and explores the value of using a different paradigm. She concludes that girls do not have to change their primary object to become female. Pathological forms of the normal ambivalent attachment to the mother are vehement rejection, as with Electra, or the opposite, a close symbiotic bond. Both outcomes testify to the centrality of the maternal love object for the girl, and either can lead to masochistic resolutions of the mother–daughter bond. The girl must steer between the Scylla of a symbiotic illusion vis-à-vis her maternal object and the Charybdis of hatred of it. The inner relationship with the maternal image can foster a woman’s development, serve as a source of strength or be a well of pathology. Electra illustrates her preoccupation with her mother in a combination of latent approach and manifest avoidance. Women do turn to their male object of desire, not instead of, but in addition to their first love object, the mother. In healthy development, not the inner mother, but the childhood fantasy of the phallic mother is given up, allowing the difference between the parents to be recognised and genuine heterosexual desire established. Female heterosexuality will always be accompanied by a strong homosexual undercurrent.

One might wonder what would have happened if psychoanalysis had had a female rather than a male discoverer. Instead of the Oedipus complex, might a myth like ‘Electra’ have become the central paradigm? Would the role of the mother have been as reduced in the early history of psychoanalysis (see also Gay, 1988, p. 505)? As it is, Freud only discovered the consequences of a woman’s special tie to her mother after he mapped out most of his theory. In 1931, at the age of 75, he was still struggling to solve the riddle of the female psyche. He admitted the limited applicability of the Oedipus complex to girls. The concept had to be stretched almost beyond recognition to include women. To save ‘the kernel of the Oedipus concept’, Freud coined the term pre-oedipal, thus raising the question about the girl’s Oedipus complex. Concepts like ‘early oedipal’ and the second oedipal phase had to be added later to make room for the central place of the mother for both genders.

I want to explore Electra as a paradigm for female development because it grants a central place to the mother–daughter relationship. A woman’s destiny is decided at birth by the ambivalence of this relationship (Balint, 1973; Bergmann, 1982; Bernstein, 1983, 1993; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970; Chodorow, 1989; Dahl, 1989, 1995; Deutsch, 1945, e.g. p. 120; Hamon, 1992; Herman, 1989; Jones, 1933, 1935; Klein, 1928, 1932, 1963; Mack-Brunswick, 1940, p. 317; McDougall, 1986; Nadelson, 1989; Oliner, 1982; Rivière, 1991; Schafer, 1974). If the love they feel for their father is a secondary formation in girls, why don’t we replace ‘the pre-oedipal tie to the mother’ by the Electra complex. We might even need more specifications, rather than taking generalisations like the Oedipus or
Electra complex, especially concerning the more complicated and multi-layered state of affairs in girls. The fact that the importance of the ongoing homosexual object relationship for girls and women is traditionally not fully recognised might explain why so little has been written about female homosexuality (see McDougall, 1995, p. 38, where she reneged on her generalisations regarding female homosexuality). Some authors have argued that not only the homosexualities but heterosexualities need explanation as well, as both are too complex to justify generalisations (Chodorow, 1992; McDougall, 1995; Simon, 1991).

Today most analysts would agree that femininity does not result from penis envy or the absence of castration fears. The theory of a change of zone from the clitoris to the vagina conflicts with all the available evidence. The change of object, from mother to father, remains open to question.

The central place of her mother in a woman's life means that she is born and continues to live with the legacy of a homo-erotic bond. Having a first love object who is of the same sex, and who is the one she identifies with creates a double allegiance for the girl. These factors make her individuation as a person and her sexuality, though not her gender identity, more conflicted than for boys. Every step the girl takes leads by definition to renewed identification with her mother, promoting regressive tendencies as well (Deutsch, 1944, pp. 115-120).

My central question regarding female development is: does the girl change her love object from her mother to her father? Or does she add a heterosexual object choice to a homosexual one? Moreover, what does a woman's discontent have to do with the issue of mother and daughter, with identification, individuation and separation in female development?

MULTIGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

The Jewish God must have been envious of women, able as they are to duplicate themselves and create males to boot. That might be why 'He created man in his own image'. Woman was not fortunate enough to be created in God's image, she was only taken from Adam's rib or, like Athena, from Zeus' head. However, in reality, in contrast to the myths, it is woman's fate to re-create herself, especially in her daughter. Mother and daughter are thus more strongly and more ambiguously bound to and identified with each other than males. The fact that a mother is closer to her offspring can have the advantage of helping her transmit mothering more easily. However, it also carries the risk of perpetuating maternal deficiencies and facilitates the transmission of pathology along the female lineage. It is not unusual to find traumas dating back to the mother and grandmother in the histories of women (Bell, 1996; Benedek, 1973; Herman, 1989).

As the history of femininity begins before the child is born, the girl's emotional destiny is ... affected by the reliving of the mother's relationship toward her own mother when she was a little girl... Awareness of gender identity thus provides an unconscious historical and dynamic generational link... (Bergmann, 1982, p. 175).

ELECTRA

Electra has always stirred the imagination. This puzzling woman, recreated as mythical figure, has become the subject of classical and modern dramas alike, representing a collective female unconscious (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, J. Giraudoux, 1937; J-P. Giraudoux, 1965; Hofmannsthal, 1908; O'Neill, 1932). Her words and deeds, like those of Oedipus, concretise the dreams, wishes and symbols encountered in analysis.

Oedipus and Electra both had infanticidal parents and committed parricide themselves. Unlike Oedipus, who did not mean to kill his father, Electra planned her mother's murder in cold blood. Whereas Oedipus inadvertently slew a total stranger, Electra bore a grudge that became part of her identity. For years, she intended to kill her mother Clytaemnestra.
ELECTRA VERSUS OEDIPUS

and finally she succeeded in executing her plan. All the Greek and modern texts seem to agree that Electra’s rage and vociferous suffering signified an accusation against her mother, whose victim she felt herself to be. It remains difficult to understand why Electra idealised her father Agamemnon—a cunning and cruel character—against all the evidence to the contrary. He not only killed Clytemnestra’s first husband and children, he also tried to kill Electra (Euripides) and finally sacrificed Iphigeneia in his plea for a favourable wind. He left for Troy when Electra was still a young girl and could not have been much more to her than a myth. Electra became an unhappy lonely woman, accusing her mother of neglect. She was preoccupied with her father’s replacement by another man in her mother’s bed. She was chronically angry, disappointed and demonstratively the victim of misfortune, for which she sought revenge. She deeply hated her mother. By contrast, she imagined she loved a distant father who did not care about daughters and identified with him in his absence. Her bisexual tendency was clear when she belittled her husband, cut her hair, and used her brother as her instrument in killing their mother.

I now want to make some brief remarks about two cases that I think illustrate the transgenerational transmission of trauma—an absence of maternal love and its consequences—as a developmental interference, albeit that in the context of this paper I shall not substantiate that thesis. Both examples are pertinent to the exacerbation of the average mother-daughter conflicts seen in extreme or tragic circumstances.

DANA

Dana first came in her early twenties because of bulimia, vomiting and masochistic fantasies during intercourse. She led a quite promiscuous life, but longed for a steady relation with a man. Her mother she had vaguely feared. Her only early memory was of avoiding her mother’s frightening and hostile eyes.

Later, her mother, having been invalided by a car accident, committed suicide after Dana, meanwhile a mother herself, openly showed resistance for the first time ever. She had always been an obedient child without any signs of pubertal protest. Her mother was a discontented woman, unfaithful to her husband, unhappy to have children, and depending on Dana for support.

Meanwhile she is in her late forties, has a stable life with a faithful dependable husband whom she often dislikes, teenage children and work of her own. However, the masochistic fantasies persist, together with bouts of anxiety and anxious depressed moods. She has been in psychotherapy for many years and tends to come back for short terms of treatment in new phases of her life. She is attached to me, she knows she is welcome, but still she is always tense and anxious when we meet. To my surprise this has never changed although transference interpretations about hostility were made. Fear towards me remained, next to a very positive transference. The introjection of a non-threatening maternal object has kept eluding us to this day. I wonder if a full-blown analysis—she was turned down by the Institute—might have had a stronger impact on Dana.

Years into treatment, unexpectedly for me, Dana disclosed a family secret that went back four generations via the maternal lineage. Her great-grandmother had worked as a housekeeper in the home of rich people. After her boss impregnated her she was sent away while her child was kept as a daughter of the family. This child—whose existence bore living testimony to the humiliation suffered by both mothers—must have felt how she was hated. To her adoptive mother she must have remained a painful reminder of the unfaithfulness of her husband. Dana’s problems had always seemed larger than life. Now I felt that the rejection of a daughter by her mother(s) must have been transmitted through the generations. Her fear of me, anxiously expecting
rejection because she did not feel welcome as a daughter, became more understandable. I think Dana’s masochistic fantasies when having sex with her husband serve to combat her fear of closeness to her maternal object perceived as rejecting. Her unacknowledged hatred and her feeling the victim of her mother was split off into her masochistic sexual scenario. Probably because of her treatment, her daughters did not suffer the same ambivalence for her. She loves them and is proud of them.

'ANITRA

Anitra suffered a postpartum depression before entering analysis. Like Dana she combined being attached to me and never fully trusting me. During her depression she was angry with her devoted husband, though not with her mother. Like Dana she had always supported her mother, who herself had suffered a postpartum depression. They banded together against the father, splitting off all negative feelings towards him. During the analysis it occurred to Anitra that her mother was not interested in the baby and she demanded more attention for herself by falling ill. This irritated her and for the first time she became more critical of her mother. She became able to resist unreasonable demands better.

Anitra’s mother had been neglected as a child who lost her mother early. The family lived in South America and family legend has it that the grandmother died, while living a lonely life in a remote area, by overeating. The father cared for his daughter, but he was a horseman, travelling large distances and often leaving his child with strangers. This story, combined with the fact that Anitra had a special preoccupation with food, poisoning and health, led me to think that her mother transmitted her own lack of mothering to her daughter. Anitra was too responsible and guilty, while unconsciously full of rage. Her depression cleared-up, she left analysis after two years and had a second child. She let me know that all went well with her and her two sons. When I met Anitra years later, she had just decided to leave her husband, which she felt as a great relief.

Both women blamed their husbands for the shortcomings of their mothers, whom they unconsciously hated. Separation from the internal mother and the oral sadistic ties to her was far from successful in either Anitra or Dana. Although conscious identification with the mothers was limited, the unconscious identifications were very strong. As illustrated by these two cases, the role of the mother remains central for a woman throughout her life.

FREUD AND THE FEMALE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Notwithstanding a common assumption to the contrary, Dora’s analysis casts some doubt on the Oedipus complex as a causative factor. Blass writes:

The shift to the Oedipus complex was not only an unnecessary move, but it could be carried out only with the greatest difficulty. The questions or issues that stood in the way of the oedipal model at the time of the abandonment of the seduction theory ... remain unresolved to this day (1992, p. 182).

Dora had an unresolved and strong ambivalent tie to her mother and used males for revenge rather than love. Her desire was more directed towards Frau K than towards her husband, Dora’s seducer. After Dora, Freud did not publish any other case histories to corroborate the Oedipus complex in women, though it is known that he analysed many more women. Did he not find what he was looking for (Hamon, 1992)? His ‘homosexual woman’ (Freud, 1920) had erotic ties with a flamboyant lady after she felt rejected by her mother. In his famous ‘Case of paranoia’ (Freud, 1915), it is the internal mother who decides whether sexuality with a male is permitted.
Probably the longest analysis Freud ever conducted with any female patient was with his daughter Anna (1918-1922 and 1924-1925, see Young-Bruehl, 1989). Her analysis may have helped him uphold his hesitant view of the female Oedipus complex and influenced his ideas on femininity (Simon & Blass, 1991). Freud’s articles ‘Femininity’ and ‘Female sexuality’ are both very reminiscent of Anna’s analysis, as she described it herself on several occasions with admirable boldness (A. Freud, 1923; see also her letters to female confidantes).

In “A child is being beaten” (1919), a large portion of which seems derived from Anna, girls conceal their oedipal wish behind the unconscious masochistic masturbation fantasy of a boy being beaten by his father. Freud’s lifelong concern about masturbation and more specifically, female clitoral activity, which would mean no change of zone had taken place and femininity would be precluded, was in keeping with Anna’s outspoken ideal of sublimation (1923).

Why sublimation should replace a satisfactory sex life and could not be combined with creativity remains unclear. Anna’s analysis, as she described it herself, had a great deal to do with the abandonment of clitoral masturbation, masochistic fantasies and male identifications (Blass, 1993; A. Freud, 1923; Young-Bruehl, 1988, Chapter 3). A daughter’s love for and attachment to her mother are hardly mentioned at all (Freud, 1919, p. 186). In fact, the word ‘daughter’ does not appear in the Index of the Standard Edition. After 1925, Freud often reiterated his opinion that girls hate their mothers. Surprisingly, the possibility that female masochism derives from matricidal impulses towards the hated mother is not considered.

In 1931, Freud conceded that women often do not overcome their attachment to their mothers. He admitted that his Oedipus complex was threatened by this discovery. Instead of refocusing his theory to account for female development, he formulated the hypothesis of a longer pre-oedipal phase in women and thus made room for the enduring homosexual attachment to the mother.

Anna’s long analysis might have had fateful consequences for Freud’s vision of the girl and her supposed change of object, ‘that brings this powerful attachment of the girl to her mother to an end’ (Freud, 1933, p. 121). Anna, the unwelcome last child in the Freud family, felt neglected and disappointed in her mother. She subsequently became very attached to her father, whom she idolised, like Electra, without making an eventual heterosexual object choice. The turning to the father as a defense is worth considering here (Lax, 1994). Here, as in other cases, the change of object should be questioned. Anna shared her life with a woman and had a lifelong fascination with mothers and motherhood, though always from the point of view of the child, and never considering the needs of mothers (Freud and Anna both overlooked Martha’s postpartum depression).

For Freud, Anna represented the strongest possible example of women who drastically changed their object. She became proof of an Oedipus complex in women. The question of why such women reject femininity, strive to de-identify with their mother altogether, and wish to become their father’s companion instead remains unanswered. Although Anna’s development cannot have impressed Freud as exemplary, it helped him to uphold his vision that girls do change their primary object and zone. Subsequently, in Freud’s view, the absence of vaginal sensations and the inhibition of all sexuality belonged to the normal vicissitudes of the female Oedipus complex.

And of course most authors agree even today that female sexuality is usually more inhibited and masturbation less frequent or less open—though by no means absent—than in males (Fraiberg, 1972; Kleeman, 1976). This is usually seen as connected to mother–daughter conflicts around control, although too little is known about this subject (Bergmann, 1982; Clover, 1975, 1976).

In fact, the path towards femininity described by Freud is such a circuitous one...
that it becomes difficult to understand why a
girl would ever become a woman at all. To
become heterosexual rather than a woman
with a masculinity complex and a strong
homosexual inclination was not at all 'natu-
ral', let alone easy. No wonder Freud had dif-
ficulty answering the question 'what do
women want?' His oedipal theory demanded
more of an object change than he could
observe, as he realised full well in 1931. He
admitted that his ideas on this object change
were based on 'women with an intense attach-
ment of long duration to their father' (1933, p.
119). Without 'enough other female cases
besides Anna ('Nor have I succeeded in seeing
my way through any case completely ...' 1931,
p. 227), Freud felt relieved that there was, after
all, no need to revise his theory about the Oed-
ipus complex as the nucleus of neurosis. He
considered the object change he assumed had
taken place in his daughter to be valid proof
of the Oedipus complex in women. Although
the 'normality' of women who did change
their object could be misleading, Freud held
that women who did not change their object
were neurotic. This may have been derived
from another personal experience: he did
encounter grave resistance in weaning his wife
Martha from her mother. Though Freud con-
cluded that for women, the negative Oedipus
complex constituted the nucleus of their neu-
rosis, and though he stated that problems like
paranoia and 'fear of being killed (?devoured)
by the mother' (1931, p. 227) reside in their
pre-oedipal relation to the mother, he never-
theless held on to the Oedipus complex as the
central paradigm for both sexes. The relation-
ship between mother and daughter, always
prominent in Klein's work (1932) and
accepted by many analysts today, has
remained an area that was studied too little
for too long.

THE ELECTRA COMPLEX

Though Freud admitted that 'the Oedipus
complex applies with complete strictness to
the male child only', he continued to note
'that we are right in rejecting the term "Elec-
tra complex" [Jung's proposal], which seeks to
emphasise the analogy between the attitude of
the two sexes. It is only in the male child that
we find the fateful combination of love for the
one parent and simultaneous hatred for the
other as a rival' (1931, p. 228-9). Here Freud
demonstrates his lesser empathy with women.
In my opinion, the Electra complex describes
the much more fateful combination of love
and hatred for the same parent and seems par-
ticularly applicable to the girl in trouble.

Freud continued: 'The turning-away from her
mother is an extremely important step in the
course of a little girl's development. It is more
than a mere change of object', and he repeats
on the same page: 'The path to the develop-
ment of femininity now lies open to the girl, to
the extent to which it is not restricted by the
remains of the pre-Oedipus attachment to her
mother which she has surmounted' (p. 239, my
italics). The question remains: could a girl
surmount her attachment to her mother and
should she? Doesn't the conscious attitude of
rejection betray an unconscious attachment
to the maternal image? I suspect, moreover,
that the hostile turning away fosters stronger and more insoluble ties than
positive ones. As is to be expected, negative feelings
foster stronger and more insoluble ties than
positive ones. In fact, the prolonged hatred of
and disappointment in the mother and dis-
identifying with her do create pathology in
women, as is so well illustrated by Electra (see
also Bernstein, 1993; Herman, 1989).

ON FEMALE MASOCHISM

Notwithstanding cultural and social
changes, it may still hold true that women
have a propensity towards feeling wronged.
They tend more towards moral and/or sexual
masochism and depression, not unlike Electra
in Antiquity, when women had few chances to
express themselves and use their talents. Today women still often suffer from a 'rap-prochement complex' (Benjamin, 1986, 1988), unable to identify with the father as an agent of separation. If she is not recognised as separate by either her father or mother, her angry dependency on her primary object necessitates an inhibition of open or conscious aggression (see also Bremner Kaplan, 1976).

In the fantasy of "A child is being beaten" (Freud, 1919), one might wonder whether the beating father is not a disguise and a displacement. Isn't it the mother who lurks behind the beating father? Girls often feel themselves to be the extension, the vehicle and the victim of their mother. Or else, if a girl changes her object without being a true subject of desire, she risks becoming masochistically attached to her father or to her husband and his desires. But if the phallic mother of childhood can be overcome, this passive relationship can be transformed not only into an active, but into a heterosexual one as well. In point of fact, I suspect it is not the mother, but only the phallic mother dating from the child's earliest unconscious fantasies who is or should be given up. In all this, the case seems stronger for a change in aims and satisfactions than for a change of object. Homosexual longings in women have to be repressed but nevertheless remain strong throughout. Not only her first husband, as Freud claimed in 1931, but her second or third male object can become a re-"vis-d-vis the mother, the wish to remain one with her, is as destructive as its opposite, the defence demonstrated by Electra (Halberstadt-Freud, 1989, 1991, 1993a, b). The middle road seems to be a state of ambivalence, with the consequence that a girl cannot easily vent angry feelings towards the mother she will always need. She will tend to have silent rages and hidden murderous fantasies of the kind Freud only postulated for the boy against his father (Blum, 1996). The combination of love and hatred for the same parent, as in the case of the girl, is certainly more fateful than the boy's loving one parent and hating the other. It means that she will often feel threatened and persecuted by her maternal image. Later, trying to transmit her love on to her father and suppressing her hatred towards him make her prone to redoubled guilt feelings (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970; Oliner, 1982).

**THE ISSUE OF SEPARATION**

'I believe the girl does not have to change objects because, in fact she has never had one' (Grunberger, 1970, p. 72). Instead of changing her object, the girl remains, often ambivalently, libidinously attached to the first object from infancy onwards, all through adolescence, young adulthood, middle age and into old age. She might even transfer her relationship with her mother to the one with her daughter later on, as happened with Dana and Anita. For the woman, separation does not play the role it does for the boy. Nor is it a precondition for a healthy sexual identity, as it is for him. Separation tends to be partial rather than total, without necessarily entail-
before femininity could be achieved. The girl had to change her erotogenic zone from her clitoris to her vagina, she had to change her object from her mother to her father and she had to revert from an active to a passive attitude. Thus the girl had to give up all essential sources of gratification in order to achieve her metamorphosis into womanhood. Nothing comparable was required of a boy, since he was born and raised as a man. In fact, she had to turn from masculinity to femininity. The only libido available being male, she was supposed to be born a little man and later became a 'eunuch' until puberty. Lacking any knowledge of the vagina, equipped with a male organ, the clitoris, giving male satisfaction only, she had to pass through a phallic stage just like a boy. But to become feminine she had to undergo psychic castration, like the physical counterpart still practised in some traditional cultures (Gillespie, 1975). 'Woman's constitution will not adapt itself to its function without a struggle' (Freud, 1933, p. 117). To Freud, paradoxically, she seemed more bisexual and less feminine, and not altogether 'natural' like the boy: 'Nature takes less careful account of its function's demands than in the case of masculinity' (p. 131) (see also Blum, 1976). The boy did not have to change his love object or the focus of his sexual feelings or his male attitude. Recent research has proven once again how much of this opinion was culturally determined, as it was already abundantly clear in Freud's era that there were not enough nerve endings in the vagina to make the totally unnecessary move from clitoris to vagina desirable (Laqueur, 1990).

Meanwhile, the discussion of the twenties on whether femininity was authentic (including vaginal sensibility) has evolved towards primary femininity for both sexes (see Brierley, 1936; Fast, 1984; on the wish to be both sexes; Greenacre, 1950; Horney, 1967; Jones, 1927; Klein, 1932; Riviere, 1991; Stoller, 1985). This issue was settled in favour of the pioneers who challenged Freud. It was not the girl who began life as a boy, but the male child who had to find his gender identity by dis-identifying with his mother.

Freud assumed that the girl only became a woman in puberty, when she discovered the vagina and gave up the 'male' clitoris altogether. Today psychoanalysts agree that both sexes must have at least an unconscious or intuitive knowledge of the vagina from infancy onwards (see Brierley, 1936, on the oro-vaginal system; Kestenberg, 1968; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985, Chap. 5, about knowledge of the vagina and the implications of the Wolf Man's wish to be penetrated like a woman). Concomitant desires to penetrate or be penetrated exist in the preconscious of the child. The girl is supposed to experience internal and external erotic sensations, specifically in her vagina and clitoris.

Klein first called attention to the powerful mother, in which she was later followed by Chasseguet-Smirgel. Benjamin (1990) has a point when she criticises the view of the mother as dangerous Siren without mentioning the interiorisation of the tender caring mother of infancy. However, the mother is the first object for both sexes, as Freud stated in his *Three Essays*, but later seems to have forgotten. Both male and female can feel castigated, made helpless and narcissistically vulnerable by the overpowering phallic mother. The phallus is the symbol of power that both genders can lack. To possess a penis can help as an instrument to differentiate from and put up resistance towards the mother. Lacking this instrument and not being an adequate object for the mother creates a feeling of disadvantage in girls. Rather than the discovery of the difference between the sexes, it is the dependency problem in girls that creates penis envy. However, if it is strong nowadays it is viewed as a reaction to the girl's pregenital frustrations experienced in relation to her mother or care-taker (Bergmann, 1982; Roiphe & Galenson, 1981). Moreover, the phallic phase in girls is more often questioned and was not confirmed in observational research (Fliegel, 1986, citing the Hampstead Index; Parens, 1990). Also, the wish for a baby...
is no longer viewed as replacing the wish for a penis, but as being an authentic female desire. Freud was right though in calling attention to the problems around bisexuality, especially in girls (McDougall, 1995). Gabbard writes that 'a number of authors (Benjamin, 1988); (Davies, 1994); (Dimen, 1991); (Fast, 1984); (Ogden, 1987) have proposed a phase that might be termed "transitional oedipal play" in which children of both genders experience fluctuating identifications and ... shifting erotic fantasy with parents of both sexes' (1994, p. 1099). Bisexuality seems less repressed than in boys, who have to abandon their identificatory love for their mothers in order to become male. Little Electras want to be like father and have mother as well as have father and be like mother (McDougall, 1986). As I see it, female bisexuality is not so much a consequence of her 'male' organ, the clitoris, that has to be given up, as of her ongoing homosexual longing for her first love object (see also Dahl, 1989).

Ogden (1987) sees a transition from an inner to an external object, the father as well as the mother, and their relationship to each other, while the inner mother remains intact. Balint said: 'unless a woman can experience mutual concern with women her relationship with men is likely to be impoverished' (1973, p. 200). Her sensuous wishes, her longing for tenderness from the internal mother, cannot always or fully be satisfied by a male. My conclusion is that the important question of whether girls do change their object has to be answered in the negative. Sophocles' Electra (1986) shows us how strongly women can be driven by their love-hate relationship to their mothers. The often absent father, seen more from a distance, is desired and idealised, as in Electra's case. The maternal image is always there, in reality and before the girl's inner eye, whether loved or hated. The mother is either blamed for obstructing the girl's relationship to her father, or for not satisfying her tender homoerotic longings. This often results in a split between the frustrating all-bad mother and the idealised all-good father. For this reason the 'Electra' paradigm seems to me to be more applicable to the girl than Oedipus.

**BETWEEN SYMBIOSIS AND REJECTION**

Electra, like Oedipus, is larger than life, not only fantasising but acting on her matricidal impulses. A girl can be caught between two extremes, both of them destructive and pathological, without changing her object. She can reject her first love object and defensively turn away from her mother in hatred and disgust to escape her fear of engulfment, much as Electra did. An example can illustrate this. Eve, a young well-educated woman, came to tell me that she wanted me to see her mother. Mother and daughter, who had broken off contact, were each willing to see me on the condition that the other did so as well. I confronted Eve with the fact that she herself might need treatment because of her unresolved and painful separation from her mother. Eve shows how the manifest turning away is usually accompanied by a destructive latent or open obsession with the mother. When she returned, she told me she cried all week, felt better and did not wake up in a cold sweat any more. She had decided she wanted therapy for herself.

The other extreme is to remain in a close symbiotic bond with one's mother. This usually repeats itself over the generations and happens with mothers who have not resolved their tie to their own mothers, and subsequently use their daughters as a narcissistic extension of themselves. The mirroring of mother and daughter can create a sense of being responsible for one another's well-being, and can lead to a role reversal between the generations, with the daughter caring for the mother (Freud Loewenstein, 1981).

These two extremes, turning away from the mother and remaining firmly attached to her, are not at all opposed in meaning. Neither of them includes a change of love object from mother to father.
MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Little girls are made to feel less free to experiment with closeness and distance than boys, who are different from the mother anyway. Needing the mother and wanting to be able to do without her is a typical female conflict, making the girl more anxious and leaving her with a heightened fear of loss of love. The wish to be independent becomes laden with danger signals if this autonomy threatens the mother's narcissistic equilibrium. After all, abandoning her will be experienced as aggression and create a sense of guilt. Freud observed that girls respond more quickly to cleanliness training, are more sensitive, more sociable, more verbal and also more susceptible to fears of loss of love. The anal struggle with the mother leaves a deeper impression on the girl. She experiences a prolonged rapprochement phase, as the mother can use her daughter to realise or hide her own wishes and the daughter colludes by trying to be the perfect baby (Bergman, 1982; Mahler et al., 1975). Her sexuality is a 'cavity erotism' (Oliner, 1982), progressing from mouth to anus to vagina or regressing backwards. Oral and anal sadism vis-a-vis the mother create more complications and conflicts for the girl than for the boy (Torok, 1970). Electra shows her anal protest by walking around the palace in rags and remaining a virgin, untouched by her husband (Euripides). Moreover, the femininity and sexual confidence of the mother, as well as her rejection of bodily pleasure have a strong impact on daughters.

Daughters will always have to return to their mother as their example, their primary object of identification, and their advisor in later phases when they face the tasks and challenges of femininity. The fact that a girl needs her mother's approval to separate is further complicated by the two of them being rivals. For boys, the roles of rival and the person he is dependent on for his physical and psychic survival are usually shared more equally between the two parents. Boys do not have to identify with their love objects as girls do, and can therefore hate them with greater impunity. A boy separates from his mother to identify with his father, but for the girl her objects of love, separation and identification remain one and the same throughout.

While a girl has more invested in her mother than her brother, she realises her mother might be less erotically interested in her than in him. She is not a heterosexual object for her mother, and this makes her feel deprived by nature and less able to satisfy her mother's desires (Grunberger, 1970). This position is bound to fire her envy of her brother. As a last resort, she might be tempted to offer her whole body and person as an extension of the maternal object, and later the man. Women often remain trapped in a condition I call the 'symbiotic illusion'. If the girl is first and foremost a narcissistic extension of her mother, her fantasy is that her drive to separate will harm her mother. The symbiotic illusion is a pathological fantasy, meaning that the mother and daughter are united in an exclusive idealised bond of mutual love, banishing all negative feelings and splitting them off to a different section of consciousness or projecting them on to a third party in the outside world, e.g. the father as an outsider. In the symbiotic illusion, an oedipal dyad (Britton, 1989) instead of a triad, guilt is not primarily oedipal, but of a much more archaic kind, centred around destructive fantasies. If the mother, in collusion with her daughter, helps to deny the oedipal triangle, the daughter will experience a lack of mental space in which to develop her independence. In this shared fantasy, rivalry is repressed and the mother remains the 'prima donna' while the daughter has to know her place. Instead of the abandoned symbiotic phase, the term should be maintained to indicate a pathological union imagined by an adult. This 'false idyll', in which no difference of feeling is permitted and mutual dependency precludes the expression of angry feelings, is at odds with separation and individuation.

The primary and ongoing identification with the mother and non-separation from her
normal in traditional societies and by no means absent in our Western culture, can easily turn into pathology. Girls often grow up without developing an identity and individuality of their own, but without this precluding heterosexuality, as it would in males. In the boy it would lead to perversion and/or homosexuality (Halberstadt-Freud, 1991). Fear of re-engulfment can mask the wish for fusion in both sexes. Women can turn the longing for the mother into the opposite—a hysterical or phobic (Mahler, 1981) disgust at touching her or being physically near her, as the only means of separating from her. A woman may develop a strong aversion to maternal closeness. In postpartum depressions, it is often the mother who is feared. In vaginism, the intrusive maternal image is physically excluded. All these women may give the impression that they have turned away from their mothers, but in fact they more often show an obsessional preoccupation with her, not unlike Electra. Clare, a vaginistic analysand, had to cross her legs whenever she mentioned her mother in connection with sexuality, as she feared her mother might enter her vagina. She was already 40 when she began to think about getting pregnant. The first association that came to her mind was that she had to tell her mother. She always alternated between attracting her mother’s attention, torn as she was between seduction and warding her off.

For girls, separation is a more gradual process and never an absolute one; it is not as precondition for psychic well-being as it is for boys. The meaning of closeness and attachment for girls and boys, men and women, has been researched independently by psychoanalysts (Bernstein, 1983; Block Lewis, 1971; Irigaray, 1994; Jordan & Surrey, 1986; Silverman, 1987), linguists (Tannen, 1990) and psychologists (Gilligan, 1993). The issues of attachment, responsibility and taking circumstances more into account create a different superego in women—both stronger and more flexible—than in men. As aggression is less permitted, there is more guilt, shame and impulse control altogether.

The need to retain a mother’s love means that aggression, even primitive rage, has to be re-directed at the self rather than the object, promoting a propensity to masochism and depression in women. An older patient came to see me because she discovered in one of my publications that masochistic fantasies, like the ones she had had her whole life, could be interpreted in relation to her rather sadistic mother. In some twenty years of analysis with two analysts, her fantasies were only connected to her oedipal feelings for her father. In my experience as a female analyst, women need to work through their fears and destructive and murderous feelings towards their mother in the transference. Only after this has taken place can individuation and creativity develop without undue guilt feelings.

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Paradoxically, the meaning of fathers for the development of girls has been a neglected subject in psychoanalysis. The father as a factor from infancy onwards is denied in the theory of object change. His erotic pull on the little girl and her coquetry vis-à-vis males was recognised early on (Rotter, 1934). From their first year onwards, little girls exhibit libidinal feelings towards their fathers, much earlier than classical theory assumed (Abelin, 1971; Klein, 1928; Munder Ross, 1990).

Another important function of the father for boys as well as girls is to serve as an object of identification by being an active agent of desire and someone who recognises the child’s need for independence and sexual identity. When the girl turns towards her father, she may be afraid that her sadism, left over from the oral and anal strife with her mother, will harm him. She is afraid to lose his love as well as her mother’s. Her guilt feelings will once again induce her to inhibit her aggression (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970). His function of recognising the girl’s femininity needs to receive a new impetus during adolescence. Ideally, he should walk the tightrope between...
appreciating the girl as a woman and being seductive, the two being divided by a very fine line. The girl needs his praise and attention to feel valued as a woman. This is where Agamemnon, like many a father today, fell short. The father can compensate for or correct the relationship with the mother. But: 'If ... a reciprocal attachment persists, the relationship may become almost as crippling to her psychosexual development as a symbiotic relationship with mother' (Leonard, 1966, p. 333). He offers a second chance that can also end in a double disappointment, with dire consequences for the girl's femininity and her chances for forming and enjoying stable heterosexual object relations.

The demands a girl makes on her father tend to be less absolute and more forgiving than is the case with her mother, because of the much more archaic tie to her, as we see in Electra. She idealises him in the hope of finally realising the idyll that was lacking with her first love object. In my opinion, an adolescent daughter might have to separate from her father more than she ever did from her mother. The suggestion of an erotic tie can become frightening for both of them.

**Translations of Summary**

L'auteur soutient les arguments qui sont en faveur d'un complexe d'Electre plutôt que d'un complexe d'Edipo pour décrire les vicissitudes du développement de la femme, et explore ce que représente l'utilisation d'un paradigme différent. Elle conclut que les filles n'ont pas besoin de changer leur objet primaire pour devenir femme. Les formes pathologiques de l'attachement ambivalent normal à la mère sont des refus ardents, comme il en est pour Electre, ou bien le contraire, un lien symbiotique profond. Ces deux aspects représentent la centralité de l'objet d'amour maternel chez la fille, et tous deux peuvent conduire aux résolutions masochistes du lien mère-fille. La fille doit se mouvoir entre le Scylla d'une illusion symbiotique vis-à-vis de son objet maternel et le Charybde de sa haine de ce dernier. La relation interne avec l'image maternelle peut nourrir le développement d'une femme, servir comme une source de force ou de pathologie. Electre illustre sa façon d'être préoccupée par sa mère dans une combinaison d'approche latente et d'évitement manifesté.

Les femmes se tournent en fait vers leur objet mâle de désir non pas à la place de leur premier objet d'amour, la mère, mais en plus de celui-ci. Lors d'un développement sain, c'est le fantasme d'enfant de la mère phallique qui est abandonné, non pas la mère interne, ce qui permet que soit reconnue la différence entre les parents et que s'établie un désir hétérosexuel vrai. L'hétérosexualité de la femme sera toujours accompagnée d'un fort-courant sous-jacent homosexuel.


La autora expone ciertos argumentos a favor de la expresión complejo de Electra en vez de Complejo de Edipo, para describir las vicisitudes del desarrollo femenino y estudia la validez de usar un paradigma diferente. Concluye que las niñas no tienen que cambiar su primer Objeto de amor para convertirse en mujeres. Las formas patológicas del vínculo norma-ambivalente con la madre son o un rechazo vehemente, como en el caso de Electra; o su opuesto, un lazo totalmente simbiótico. Ambas situaciones denue- tran la importancia del Objeto de amor-madre para la niña; y ambas pueden dar lugar a soluciones más quistas en el lazo madre-hija. La niña tiene que neutralizar entre el Escilla de una ilusión de simbiosis y su Objeto materno y el Caribdis del odio de éste.
relación interna con la imagen materna puede contribuir al desarrollo de la mujer, servir de fuente de fortaleza o ser un pozo de patología. Electra ilustra la preocupación por la madre, combinando un acercamiento latente y un rechazo manifiesto. Las mujeres se vuelven hacia su Objeto masculino de deseo no en vez de, sino añadiéndolo a su primer Objeto de amor: la madre. En el desarrollo sano, no es a la madre interna a la que se renuncia sino a la fantasía inconsciente infantil de madre fálica, lo que permite reconocer la diferencia entre los progenitores y establecer un deseo heterosexual genuino. La heterosexualidad femenina siempre estará acompañada de fuertes tendencias homosexuales latentes.

REFERENCES


ELECTRA VERSUS OEDIPUS


