

**TOWARD A PREDOMINANTLY MALE ANALYSIS OF THE  
ANNOYANCE/RAGE CONTINUUM IN INTIMATE HETEROSEXUAL  
RELATIONSHIPS**

**by**

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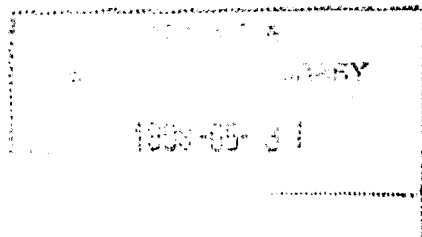
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis operates, unashamedly, from the premise that every act of criticism involves a self-reflexive gesture of one's own concerns and ideological imprintings. For this reason Chapter One establishes the writer's own involvement - both autobiographical and theoretical - in notions of male rage and the 'working through' of these concerns.

Chapter Two conducts an overview of male rage and the extant systemic literature on the subject. It sets out the various positions on the subject and posits the importance of gender (over generation) in the praxis of therapy. Furthermore, it explores the possibility that the male is equally, but differently, troubled by the hegemonic forces of patriarchy as is the woman. Without diminishing the legitimacy of the woman's experience in the face of male rage, the argument is forwarded that the male is caught in a similar struggle but without the feminine articulatory resources. This chapter details the lack of male power in the face of his supposed muscular omnipotence.

Seminal analytic approaches to the question of gender are raised in Chapter Three. Working through Freud, Klein, Lacan and Masters and Johnson an attempt is made to plot the 'evolution' of the feminine and the masculine. Central to this debate is the bi-polarization of gender relations within the same sex (biology/construction) and without (phallic/vaginal, clitoral, passive/active). What

emerges is that femininity is bi-focal and that the woman has more resources at her disposal than hitherto acknowledged. While the woman is always double - as both clitoral and vaginal, as lover and mother - it appears that male sexuality is far more precarious than generally perceived. It is this dis-ease on the part of the male that translates itself into envy and, with it, the need to denigrate and belittle woman as the object of that envy.

In Chapter 4 an attempt is made to overlap the seemingly divergent fields of analytic and systemic methodologies via the involvement of the therapist in the eco-system of analysis. The substantial role of the therapist -- and the coercive forces placed on him/her by the couple -- is used to modify Elkaim's model and to introduce the need for a telling of the particular stories that concentrate on the unique narratives of the warring couple rather than the patriarchal regime under which these stories are constrained.

Before encountering these narratives an essay is made at establishing a methodology of sorts. Newton's scientific formulations are used in order to question the binary opposition that has been, historically, established between quantitative (male) and qualitative (female) methodologies. In the process of questioning this binary opposition it becomes clear that any form of objectifying approach constitutes a refuge from the messiness that is intrinsic to the therapeutic process. The experimental methodology that is posited is precisely

one that engages in the narratives of male violence - four extracts are considered, each exposing different articulations of male violence.

The question of female subjectivity (and the attendant power of the sorority) is returned to in light of these stories. Central to this section is the notion that male subjectivity is far more convoluted - perhaps more than the feminine counterpart - than initially conceived. The original identification with the (m)other forever displaces him in that the later identification with the father remains distant and contrived. For the purposes of maintaining the dialogic nature of this work, a feminist appraisal of the rage narratives concludes the thesis. Don Quixote is used, by way of an Epilogue, to offer three representations of male subjectivity and to look towards alternative subject positions for the male under patriarchy.

### **KEY TERMS**

**Anger; annoyance; rage; heterosexual; psychodynamic; eco-systemic; patriarchy; trappedness; male subjectivity; female subjectivity; gender; envy; overlapping narratives; bi-focality; male lost-ness; male-ness.**

## CHAPTER 1

# **IN THE BEGINNING: THE AUTHOR IN THE THESIS - A PERSONAL NARRATIVE**

### **Introduction**

The present writer is a young white South African male in his late twenties. He has been married for approximately three years and has a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology. The writer is involved in the education of psychology students at the undergraduate, and more recently the post-graduate levels. He feels sure that he has the respect of the majority of his students as well as that of his colleagues who credit him with having well-evolved, valuable and competent interpersonal skills as well as a sharp mind. He has been conducting a rather successful private practice for a period in excess of four years which caters predominantly to individual patients as well as to the occasional couple or family. The writer attends regular supervision in the psychodynamic model and is a respected and regular participant in a reading group of Kleinian psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Yet beyond, or perhaps in spite of this apparent competence, sophistication of thought processes and position of relative respect, the writer has felt exceedingly vexed and perplexed in recent years. He cannot help himself from experiencing annoyance in relation to his partner and this emotion rears its head with relative frequency. This annoyance and bother is, at a cursory glance, apparently trivial and predominantly of nuisance value and it does not exclude the extremely creative, loving and productive aspects of his relationship with his spouse. Yet this annoyance appears to lurk and



hover beneath the surface with astonishing regularity and can, at times, escalate into a torrent of rage and hostility toward his partner. These torrents are frequently characterized by verbal barrages toward the partner which form part of lively and heated exchanges and they have as silent companions the wish to inflict hurt or harm - to pinch, squeeze, or even bludgeon. Thankfully, these wishes have remained in relative check.

In spite of being an articulate, intelligent, well-educated and sensitive husband, therapist and person, the fantasies seem to linger in the background and all the while the writer is sharply aware of the extent to which the verbal rage is capable of damaging his relationship with his wife and is even more acutely aware of the harm that acting on such impulses would bring to the relationship. On one exceedingly frightening occasion whilst the writer was still dating his wife, impulse spilled into action giving rise to a unique and somewhat unexpected expression: with his capacity to think narrowed by rage, and feeling helpless to the point where an adult response was simply not within cognitive or behavioural grasp, the writer bludgeoned himself a number of times to the point where he was left with significant bruising - anything not to breach the taboo on striking a woman with the phylogenetically encoded sanction that suggested, almost spontaneously (even in a moment where thought was overtly inoperative), that the relationship would suffer real or perceived irreparable harm.

In a desperate attempt to understand the apparently bizarre and extremely frightening moment, the writer even took his annoyance and rage to his four year experience in analytic psychotherapy so that it might be

understood better and so that it might be curbed. The analysis notwithstanding, and a modicum of understanding notwithstanding, the annoyance/rage continues to imprison the present writer. It perturbs him, haunts him, vexes him, and at times feels as if it is holding him hostage.

What this moment did set the writer thinking about was the extent to which he had felt cornered, trapped, bound, and imprisoned not only in his thinking and reflecting upon this isolated moment of madness, but in the situation itself. A debate as to whether or not his then girlfriend was to blame for this feeling of trappedness is per definition illegitimate as the writer clearly acknowledges responsibility for the events of the moment. However, this did set in motion a series of what the writer believes to be highly instructive reflections on the male experience of gender issues and their pragmatics in terms of the manner in which they inform the way in which men and women relate to one another in relationships, through history and in the psychological literature on the gender issue. The extent to which the writer freely acknowledges culpability for the moment of apparent insanity and exonerates his partner from blame in respect of 'causing' the incident will become crucial as this study unfolds. It does not, however, preclude the writer from a careful examination of a 'relatedness' and the gender issue.

This writer is extremely curious to understand more about the 'gendered' anger that is so much a force in his life. Given the centrality of this issue in his own life and relations, the writer is consumptively curious to discover the extent to which other men might experience similar annoyances and rages in their respective relationships and what this might be all about. Sitting at a

keyboard engrossed in churning out the first public thoughts concerning his doctoral exploration, the word 'curiosity' seems to offer itself with relative ease. However, in the heat of a couple's argument and at a moment where it felt to this writer as if his humanity had been temporarily lost, the phrase 'painful desperation to grasp' seems more to the point in respect of the task at hand. It is this desperation, these experiences of utter trappedness, and an earnest curiosity that have led the writer to evolve the ideas presented in this text.

As a prefatory remark it needs to be clearly understood that at no point is the writer looking to disown the impact of his own destructive verbal barrages, the potentially rupturing and contusing nature of aggressive male fantasies in general, the unshakeable annoyance that is experienced from time to time by men for women, or the potential and/or real impact of physical assault on women. For these the writer must bear absolute responsibility. Having assumed this responsibility, the painful, lonely and daunting task of thinking through this dilemma and working toward some sensical insights in relation to it can commence.

## CHAPTER 2

# AN EXPLORATION OF THE CENTRALITY OF GENDER TO SYSTEMS THEORY

### Introduction

The present writer, as a function of his experience in clinical practice and as a function of his own circumstances of living, is deeply interested in the notion that a modicum of annoyance is almost perpetually inherent in the relationships between the sexes. At times, this annoyance can escalate into rage which can be either verbally or physically deleterious to both of the partners. The notion that both partners are profoundly affected is one that the present writer wishes to explore at length as the present text unfolds.

The writer, as a function of his own living and clinical practice experiences, concurs with the watershed argument advanced by Goldner (1988) that Gender is an irreducible category and that in an analysis of problems of living and co-existence the notion of gender is fundamental. The centrality of gendering is, though, argued to account for the almost perpetual annoyance between the sexes. Particular interest is shown in Goldner's notion that men and women are inclined to operate differently in interpersonal relationships (Ball, Cowan & Cowan, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; Goldner, 1988; Keller, 1985; Kelly, 1978) and more specifically, that these operational differences are explained in terms of either power differentials, the biological sex difference itself, or both (Goldner, 1988).

It is suggested during the evolution of the discourse which follows, that Maturana's notions concerning structure determinism and structural coupling (Dell, 1985; Maturana, 1978) can be of value in understanding any area in which fundamental differences exist; and any area in which biological differences are prototypal for psychological differences. The notion of autopoiesis (Maturana, 1978) implies that organisms are determined by their own esoteric organization, or rather distinct organization on the basis of esoteric structure, and the notion of autopoiesis is also one which is, incidentally, rooted in biology. The value of these ideas is that they might begin to point toward notions which have to do with the fact that men and women are at least anatomically different and that this might have something to do with the psychological distinctions between them. This will be rigorously investigated in the next chapter.

It will be suggested that the annoyance/rage problem that characterizes relations between heterosexual intimates has created an isomorphism in the family therapy (Bateson, 1979; Dell, 1985; Keeney, 1983) and feminist literature (Goldner, 1988; Libow et al, 1982; Macintyre, 1983; MacKinnon & Miller 1987; Walters, 1988) – that just as relations between heterosexual intimates might be characterized by anything from a modicum of low grade annoyance to overt violence, so too does one find similar and mirroring events in the literature on the subject. It is therefore suggested that a reflection on this process of polarization in the literature (Flemons, 1989) might yield instructive answers concerning being able to assist couples in

distress and might lend some general understanding to those couples who live with a modicum of annoyance that is inclined to emerge from time to time at 'non-pathological' or less worrisome levels.

It is this writer's view that the most helpful and liberating literature in terms of understanding of the imprisonment of humankind at the hands of biology and patriarchy (Goldner, 1988) [although Goldner does not recognize the imprisonment of humankind in this particular paper, but rather the imprisonment and confinement of women exclusively] is a sequence of papers to have evolved out of a conference on the Experiences of Men, Women and Power (Doan, Gutsche & Hatfield, 1992; Gutsche, Doan & Hatfield, 1992). It is suggested that the lines along which the conference was convened is what contributed to an escape from the polarization of the feminist and more traditional perspectives. It would seem that the conference abandoned the "fighting lifestyle" approach of its attenders' patients (Doan et al; 1992, p.20) and simply permitted the evolution of a sequence of overlapping conversations (Doan et al; 1992; Gutsche et al; 1992) in which participants shared their narratives about the problem, and in which there was persistent self-reflection in terms of understanding the theoretical and interpersonal violence that might otherwise have been perpetrated gratuitously.

Of particular interest is that this leads full circle back to Maturana's (1986) thinking on violence which suggests that any attempt to impose opinion or will on another is, in fact, violence. This represents a radical shift from the position that instructive interaction (Dell, 1985) is impossible given autopoietic

organization (the position objected to by feminist writers [MacKinnon & Miller, 1987]). Rather, Maturana (1986) seems to be suggesting that attempts at instructive interaction can indeed be made with painful consequences for the individual on the receiving end of such attempts and that such attempts are destructive and injurious rather than epistemologically impossible – the destructiveness is embedded in the tension between the ought generated by the instructor and the structure determinism of the instructee. The fact that the discussion has returned to the work of Maturana, which this author values in that it is argued that it is able to explain differences in terms of structure, is not a lucky co-incidence. Further, Maturana's notion that structure is not synonymous with stasis (Dell, 1985) and that it can alter through exposure to, or drift in, a medium or context (Efran & Lukens, 1985) seems to fit the methodology of the conference described above in terms of overlapping conversations which are not instructive interactions but rather attempts at benign exposures to difference and experience.

In sum then, this writer will suggest that like the couples that family therapists endeavour to treat, the literature on annoyance between the sexes is polarized. This polarization is best understood in terms of the critique offered by the present writer on the work of Goldner (1988). In this critique the writer points to certain potentially fallacious assumptions concerning the role of men in patriarchal society in terms of the fact that the problem of living in a patriarchal society has not simply led to the imprisonment of the woman, but also to the imprisonment of the man who might be as much an organism with

organization against whom more subtle violence has been perpetrated by the medium of patriarchy. This writer acknowledges that to critique Goldner's position is an act of theoretical violence in and of itself. However, this writer is attempting to furnish the absent male voice on the gender/power issue.

Family therapy should concern itself with the liberation of humankind and consequently two overlapping narratives require presentation: the male and the female, each of which has had exposure to the deleterious medium of patriarchy.

Ultimately, this writer will present a model for dealing with and understanding the annoyance-rage continuum of manifestations in couples' contexts that is informed by the work of Goldner (1988) who contributes the insights as to the central location of gender in couples' problems; Elkaïm (1986) whose model is concerned with the liberation of couples who are imprisoned in binds, where the imprisonment metaphor is one that seems most moot in relation to the annoyance – rage issue; the work of Maturana (1974, 1978, 1986) and Maturana and Varela (1973, 1980, 1987) which seems to make room for biological and psychological structural and highly esoteric imperatives and the sorts of contexts or media in which these seem to evolve through gentle exposure; and the work of M. White (1982, 1986) and Epston (1986) whose externalization model might locate patriarchy as the third force or external violator at whose hands the male and female have both been imprisoned.



## **The Problem of Polarization in the Literature**

Watzlawick (1984) writes about the profound threat posed to conventional Aristotelian logic by self-referential statements such as 'all Cretans are liars'. It is suggested that such referential statements did more than simply generate ominous creaking in the foundations of existing epistemologies. It is posited that such illogicalities constituted a "sedition in the kingdom of the orthodox" (Watzlawick, 1984, p.250). Von Foerster (in Watzlawick, 1984) goes on to document the frightening prospect that intellectuals of the calibre of Bertrand Russel do nothing to integrate or assimilate these contradictions but elect rather to rule them logically 'illegitimate' and to dismiss them.

The question of the existence or non-existence of power appears to pervade the family therapy literature. On the one hand there are those who apparently hold doggedly to the position that was initially espoused by Bateson (1979) that power is an arbitrary punctuation without which the world would be a more benign and significantly less corrupt place. Bateson argues coherently for the non-existence of the reality of power on the basis of the fact that no one part of a given system can exert unilateral control over any other part of that same system. This is a position supported by Dell (1985) in his earlier work, and Keeney (1983). Maturana (in Dell, 1985) too, opposes this notion but couches his opposition in a different set of punctuations, suggesting that instructive interaction is logically impossible. On the other hand, there are

the feminist critics of this position (Braverman, 1986; Goldner, 1985, 1988; Goodrich, Rampage, Ellman & Halstead, 1988; MacKinnon & Miller 1987; Walters, 1988) who argue with equal cogency for the non-dismissal of power as a logical impossibility given its real world manifestations in family violence contexts in which a preponderance of musculature and access to financial and community resources on the part of one partner (usually the male in a patriarchal society) can frequently result in deleterious physical and pragmatic consequences for the partner who has less 'musculature'. Bruises, broken bones, and eventually corpses are less easily relegated to the epistemologically impossible domain than philosophical constructs (Fish, 1990; MacKinnon & Miller, 1987).

It would appear then that the literature confronts one with a problem without solution. The literature, at least prior to the early 90's, would seem to present the potential reader with an either/or dichotomy (D Miller, 1988) which is highly unsystemic in nature. The defenders of the conventional systemic epistemology are doing precisely what Watzlawick (1984) warns against when he critiques the folly of linearity and Aristotelian logic and the manner in which a non-match with what is known is instantaneously relegated to the realms of the absolutely impossible without due recognition of the relative impossibility of that new distinction in terms of a dated epistemology. And the feminists argue equally unilaterally for the recognition of the construct of power and its real world implications. MacKinnon and Miller, (1987, p.145) suggest for instance that "it is those who lack an analysis of power relations who most easily, albeit unintentionally, engage in oppressive relationships".

It is strongly suggested that this dualism is unsystemic in that it creates an either/or situation whereas a truly systemic position embodies a "both/and" perspective (Hoffman, 1981; D Miller, 1988). Further, it is this writer's view that the dualism creates an instructive, yet unnecessary tension in the literature in that it leads to an apparently insoluble polarization. The problem with adhering to the first position is that the reader is tempted to participate unwittingly in the patriarchal social contract (Goldner, 1988) which not only turns a blind eye to the real suffering of the woman, but also implicates the woman in this process ... perhaps even conferring blame upon her for the abuse that has transpired. This abuse is suffered at the hands of intentionally and unintentionally oppressive men who get away with theoretical murder in the literature and real murder (or various approximations thereof) in the real world of relationships. The problem with the feminist position is that it is inclined to pathologize the oppressive man. This process is equally unsystemic in that it serves to arbitrarily assign labels such as 'abuser' to a constellation of men (Flemons, 1989). Theoreticians and clinicians alike are duty-bound to avoid the traps of blaming either the victim or the victimizer or else they are likely to get into the ill considered, dichotomous logic of attributions (Flemons, 1989).

## Two Levels of Description: Theory and Practice

It is the present writer's firm conviction that if the dichotomy that has evolved in the family therapy literature can be understood, grappled with, and handled with sensitivity, that this might just yield to a model which informs our praxis with warring and annoyed couples. Elkaim (1986) seems to support this view when he suggests that the therapist is not a neutral observer, but a participant in the therapeutic context with the struggling couple and that the couple's issues will necessarily be reconstructed in relation to the participant-observer-therapist. This notion is also firmly imbedded in object relations theories of therapy which would assert that projective identifications necessarily impact on the therapeutic process (more specifically on the persona of the therapist in the countertransference) and that the therapist cannot avoid being a receptacle for these (Joseph, 1981). Like Elkaim (1986), the object relations therapists do not flee before the projective identifications of their patients. Rather, they understand them as useful and rich communicative messages about their patient's internal relationship ecologies (Bion, 1963, 1967; Joseph, 1981; Segal, 1974). It is argued that the angst of male-female relations has, as a matter of course, spilled over into the theorizing about male-female relations and that it would be unsystemic to suggest that the theorizing could occur in a vacuum without the influence of the dilemma between the couple encroaching at another level of system. The present writer suggests that therapeutic intervention at the level of making the

theoretical world a more liveable and less polarized one might furnish some clues as to a useful model in praxis in respect of couples in difficulty.

It is argued that the following circumstances characterize the literature on the question of violence between heterosexual partners (these will be illustrated and referenced in the ensuing discussions) :

1. Violence in the form of injunctions about how things ought to be understood.
2. Violence in terms of blaming of the woman for her role in the abuse. This fancy systemic manner of conceptualizing (which includes the idea that the woman is a protagonist in the cybernetic drama) might be argued to carry the implicit tone that it must be right and that it is the less theoretically adept feminist writer who just cannot be helped to understand the theoretical elegance of the systems approach. This might be seen as an isomorphism for the oppression of woman by entitled men.
3. Prolific writing on the part of feminist critics in which an oppression of the male 'perpetrator' inadvertently and intentionally takes place. This might be an isomorphism for 'henpecking.'
4. Silence on the part of those males who do not throw their theoretical lot in with the feminists.

5. General misery, irritation, and a feeling of not being understood on the part of both sides of the debate.
6. A predilection for concentrating on extreme cases of wife battering and explosive violence. This might be an isomorphism for the focus between partners on the acute violent episodes rather than on the relational ecology in which they occur.

### **An Exploration of Annoyance/Rage: The Theoretical Level of System**

Perhaps the most useful point of departure for this study would be to attempt to listen carefully to the arguments set forth in Goldner's (1988) watershed paper entitled Generation and Gender: Normative and Covert Hierarchies. The notion of quiet and attentive listening is a crucial one in that it might yield an approximation of an understanding of the other in a respectful way and might pave the way for a reciprocal listening when the first listener's narrative is later presented. This is what was referred to by the present writer in the INTRODUCTION where the beauty of the overlapping conversations' evolutionary development was presented (Doan et al, 1992; Gutsche et al, 1992).

The essence of the argument advanced is that gender is an "irreducible category" (Goldner, 1988, p.17) in the sense that it is not one of those peripheral variables or mediating variables that family therapists can attend to or not, but that it is a factor that defines relationships in any society. It is

cogently argued that the gender issue needs to be brought center stage in family therapy and that benign and perhaps even unintentional attempts to mystify the issue on the part of theoreticians such as Haley (1973, 1976a) and Parsons (1954, 1960) need to be understood as products of the patriarchal societies within which these theoreticians functioned.

It is forcefully argued that Haley (1973, 1976a) is inclined to place far too much emphasis on generation as an organizing principle in family problems and only fleeting emphasis on the idea that gender is a fundamental organizing principle in family problems. The present writer is in complete agreement with Goldner (1988) that gender ought to be brought into prominence both in our thinking about human problems as well as in our theorizing about it. It is thought to be of importance not only theoretically, but also as a function of this writer's personal story and the stories of many of his patients which seem to have everything to do with a constant and irksome annoyance between the sexes at one end of the continuum, and violent rage at the other. In presenting her case, Goldner makes a number of points which the present writer feels are instructive beyond the overriding issue that gender ought to receive priority in thinking and working with human problems.

Firstly, Goldner (1985) locates the rise of the feminist movement in a sorority between women who "met together to compare notes on their lives" (p.17). The point is made that in these meetings women began to evolve the notion that they had been deprived of their subjectivity by a society that was defined largely in patriarchal terms and that they were entitled to more than

this from their environs. It is exceedingly interesting to the present writer that, by and large, men do not really have access to contexts in which they themselves can converse freely about their experience of the world or of patriarchal society and more interesting that this is not fully appreciated by Goldner. That men have contexts in which they can meet is self evident. Whether men have the linguistic apparatus and the inclination to discover their painful entrapment at the hands of patriarchy is another matter which will receive more detailed attention at a later time. It is pointed out though that research seems to indicate that men are inclined to want to control emotional content and depth in therapeutic couples' explorations more than their female counterparts (Ball et al, 1995). This difference is instructive not only as a denotation of how difficult the emotional and intimacy terrains can be for the male (Banker-Miller, 1987; Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Margolin & Wampold, 1981), but at a more contorting level (and more significantly in this writer's view) how it is this very difficulty that deprives the male of the opportunity to examine the difficulty and to free himself from it.

Secondly, the point is conveyed that the project of transforming family therapy by 'gendering' it is an "intimidating" one (Goldner, 1988, p.18) and that this is particularly the case as family therapists by their very natures prefer not to be on the "wrong side' of a socially progressive issue" (Goldner, 1988, p.18). The implication here is that there might be much theoretical compliance with the feminist position on the part of theoreticians who might wish to disagree with the feminist status quo but who are silent in the face of risking



political incorrectness. Striking to this writer in this regard is that this ecological arrangement might be an isomorphism for the relationship between partners where one partner might elect to adopt the position of withdrawal, obstinacy, and non-progression which could include much annoyance/rage but might not wish to articulate this experience for fear of being 'henpecked' all over again. It would seem that there is little recognition of how entrapped both partners can feel in marital conflict and that the male might have less access to contexts in which the trappedness can be explored. The literature is beginning to be concerned with the "pervading sense of deprivation often felt in father son relationships as a result of gender training [in a patriarchal society]" (Gutsche et al, 1992, p.34). Following arguments in the marital holon, it is probably fair to suggest that it is significantly more likely that the wife will contact her mother, a sister, or a best friend and that she will have the linguistic wherewithal to talk about it, than it is to suggest that a son will contact his father, a brother, or a best friend and that he will have the tools to negotiate how he feels. In the extreme case, it seems far more likely that the woman will be able to get help in the battering circumstances from a woman's organization or even from compassionate and sensitive men, than it seems likely that the male will be able to obtain help with his helpless rage (Adams, 1990; Dienhart & Avis, 1990 ; Gutsche et al, 1992). This issue does not receive ample attention from Goldner (1988) and is of profound significance in the therapeutic domain. It will be addressed in later discussions.

Thirdly, Goldner (1988, p.18) makes reference to an "edgy climate" which

is intermittently adversarial in the corridors of systemic theorizing and practice. This edginess would seem to remind the writer of the low grade annoyance that inheres in his own relationship as well as the more acute bouts of adversarial rage that emerge from time to time.

In the discussion, Goldner (1988) makes frequent reference to the objectification of women. The present writer listens attentively to this argument and understands it in as far as is possible given his own autopoietic organization. Yet curiosity is experienced at the possibility that patriarchy has exacted some price on the males who function under it also.

This does not minimize the acute pain of the female experience, but merely raises other possibilities concerning the male narrative under patriarchy which has been touched on above and which will be explored later.

Fifthly, Goldner (1988) suggests that the gender issue is so fundamental that to ask what are the gender issues in a given situation is to minimize the eminence of such issues. They ought not to be sought, they simply are. They cannot be scrambled for, they inhere. Of particular interest to this writer is the parenthetical comment that the notion that gender is defining includes "the corollary that gender is organized hierarchically with men in the dominant position" (Goldner, 1988, p.28). This remark is interesting in that it would appear to contribute to the polarization in the literature as it imputes that women have always been the losers in family life or that at best, they have functioned at a distinct disadvantage. Again, the present writer does not wish to detract from the real sense in which women have suffered in a patriarchal

society. However, this sort of remark excludes the possibility that men too have been short-changed. It is crucial to understand that the present writer does not wish to exonerate those males that have engaged in damaging and violent acts. The present writer simply wishes to point out, having heard with acuity the extent to which the woman has battled, the possibility that patriarchy has meant more to men than a licence to bludgeon their respective ways through history.

It is suggested that the bringing of gender issues to the middle of the male-female problematic – or perhaps put more accurately the recognition of the fact that gender difference has always been there – might make the theoretical and practical climate more bearable and less “tiresome and repetitive” (Goldner, 1988, p.28) for practitioners and theoreticians alike. The present writer concurs with Goldner in this regard. However, to assert unilaterally that the woman has been the exclusive sufferer at the hands of male hegemonic relations is to inflame the debate, not to put it to rest.

In sum then, this writer is at one with Goldner (1988) that the presence of gender issues has everything to do with being a family member and is as significant in family therapy (if not more so) than the generational issue. Yet in the evolution of this position and in its presentation there are certain explicit and implicit assumptions which amount to the location of the woman as the sufferer at the hands of male dominion. This position asserts that the woman has been imprisoned or jailed by patriarchy and fails to touch on the vexation experienced by this writer and his male fellows in relationships and the possible deleterious sequelae of patriarchy for men.

Goldner (1988) asserts that family therapists need not create a laboratory for the investigation of the gender problematic. Rather, it is inherent in the circumstances of living of men and women. This is corroborated by the experience of this writer as an alive male. It is suggested that the annoyance and rage experienced are born out of a gendered context in which there are, by definition, power relations and sex differences (Goldner, 1988). Where this writer departs from Goldner's view is that this gendered context does not necessarily always locate the woman in the position of loser and that to grapple with any couple's problem two overlapping narratives need to be considered: one female, and the other male. There seems not to be room for the male narrative in Goldner's approach and it is therefore unreasonable to expect that "new possibilities for theory, research, and practice" (Goldner, 1988, p.28) are likely to emerge at this juncture.

### **Some Notes on the Prevalence of Abusive Heterosexual Relationships**

It is widely reported that violence between spouses or even just male-female partners is extremely common (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Doan et al, 1992; Farrington, 1986; Flemons, 1989, Justice et al, 1985; Levine, 1986; Ryan, 1995; Witt, 1987). The present writer takes the prevalence of violent acts between the sexes as evidence for the thesis advanced by Goldner (1988) that gender differences would appear to be crucial and determining aspects of human problems and that men and women are engaged in a painful struggle around these issues, a struggle which frequently leads to overtly violent outcomes.

However, while the sources cited above are useful in highlighting the gender issue and bringing it into glaring focus, almost without exception they refer to overtly abusive acts definable in overt behavioural terms. The majority of these sources would seem to refer to physical acts of beating predominantly, with severe verbal abuse at the so-called 'mild' end of the continuum of patients investigated. Further, it would be fair to suggest that family violence in general and violence between partners in particular, is portrayed as aberrant, deviant, and vile behaviour. Particularly those articles that appear in the Journal of Family Violence seem to concentrate on abuse at the battering end of the continuum and tend to center on "ghastly accounts of spouse abuse" (Levine, 1986, p.1). These reports warrant comment because they cloud the issue of thinking about a struggle between the sexes by introducing those cases which are lethal.

The fundamental assumptions of the sort of studies reported above and others (Wolfgang & Ferrecutti, 1967) would seem to be that violence is unevenly distributed in pockets across society and further that violence is an aberrant phenomenon (Flemons, 1989). The logical extension of this position is that violence and the violent can be labelled, hunted down, and extinguished. While it is not this writer's intention to exonerate the perpetrators of violence and while this writer believes that perpetrators of violence must be responsible for their actions, an evolution of helpful understandings of the phenomenon of "wife battering" requires investigation of those assumptions set forth at the beginning of this paragraph which begin to seem spurious.

Studies have shown that violence is not unevenly distributed in society and that it is inclined to manifest in more contexts than just in certain ethnic or class domains (Gelles, 1979; Strauss, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). It is further helpful to note that violence is not always perpetrated in the extreme form of bludgeoning and that sarcasm, wit, intellectual banter, and the like which manifest as a function of a comedian's job, a spouse's perceived hurt, or even a spouse's perceived disappointment can all constitute violence (Witt, 1987).

When we think of violence or abuse in the family, images of bleeding and broken children or husbands that beat up their wives for no particular reason are immediately brought to mind. Yet this type of overt behaviour is only a part of a range of abusive behaviours that may occur in the family. Most of the time, violence never reaches public consciousness as it is 'normal violence' – that is it follows the implicit rules of our culture (Witt, 1987, p.293).

Witt's argument is compelling for the present writer in that it begins to direct attention away from the extreme cases reported in the literature to date and begins to focus the attention of the writer on the irritations, antagonisms and annoyances that seem to characterize male-female love relationships as a matter of course. In fact, the argument seems to be similar to that advanced by Goldner (1988) in that it suggests that gender differences and some degree of violence are endemic in relationships as a function of patriarchal hegemony

and ought to be recognized as such without mystifications about generational issues and the like. Where this approach diverges from that advocated by Goldner is that because it sees violence as more widely spread and 'normal', the labelling of violent behaviour is not necessarily regarded as helpful in that it might begin to draw the clinician and theoretician into a circumstance where the oppressor is oppressed as a function of the labelling of his behaviour as 'abusive' or 'battering' (Flemons, 1989). Goldner, in terms of her 1988 position, would be unforgiving in this regard and might argue that the identification of hegemonic relations comes first. The present writer suggests that the identification of patriarchy and tyranny does indeed come first. However, this needs to be separated from the identification of violent men. The definitive association made in the literature seems to be that those overtly violent men are illustrative of the hegemonic set of relations that places women in a damaged heap. This is mystifying as it begins to draw attention away from the many annoyed men who grapple with their annoyance internally without acting it out or without doing so in a physically harmful way. Again this might begin to point to a situation in which patriarchy has damaged both the sexes and has brought intense anguish to each. Evidence for this might be located in the research reported by Flemons (1989) which seems to suggest that even apparently reasonable relationships have had isolated instances of physical violence – even if just once in a five-year period. The problem here might be that a reflection on the exclusively violent men in the literature might be an isomorphism for the 'focus on fault' in couples' relationships at the

expense of understanding. This is mystifying in that one is not very favourably disposed to understanding the male experience if the male is 'batterer'. It is this hyper-reflection on specific cases (undeniable, worryingly widespread and not condonable) of a particular nature that is an obstacle to any real emphatic understanding in response to a male experience and pursuant construction of a narrative under patriarchy.

While many theorists would align themselves with Goldner (1988) on the grounds that it is clinically very useful to restore a sense of sanity and normalcy to the perceptions of the battered woman (in individual therapy) by labelling the abuser (Combrink-Graham, 1993; Jenkins, 1990), and while still other therapists would find it politically incorrect to avoid labelling the behaviour of the abuser, this clinician is firmly of the view that such labelling is not helpful in resolving the problematic polarization in the theory or in practice between the partners. This point is a crucial one to grasp and it will therefore be re-iterated in other terms. This writer is of the view that violence between the sexes is extremely prevalent. Further, that this violence is indicative of the struggle between the sexes that has to do with definitions of gender in the macrocosm. Still further that this violence can offer itself in less damaging forms than is the case in the reported literature (in forms more approximating annoyance than pernicious rage) which tends to focus on extreme cases. Finally, because the literature focuses on extreme cases, it detracts from understanding the human difficulties encountered between men and women as they attempt to live together and because the stakes are so



high, the therapist and theoretician is threatened into acting and thinking unsystemically.

As always, this clinician must make the following qualification: that just because violence is widespread, simply because it is not of lethal or physically damaging proportions, and simply because labelling is thought to be undesirable even in the extreme cases, does not mean that the abusive male is exonerated or that he bears any less responsibility for his injurious behaviour. Rather, it is being suggested that those relationships in which 'normal' or low-grade violence (for which the perpetrator is still responsible) is being perpetrated should be the focus of study to help theoreticians and practitioners to get unstuck in relation to the polarization in the field.

It is being mooted that the polarization is a function of the extreme cases where the debate centers around broken bones and that this stuckness trickles into any abusive relationship including those where gross acts of brutality are not perpetrated. Study of this latter constellation of relationships might be instructive.

In sum then, the inherent value of the notion that abuse is widespread (Justice et al, 1985) in man-woman relations is that this might begin to point the way to the fact that neither the abuser nor the abused is to blame as a function of their mutual location in a patriarchal society although, until fairly recently, feminists have not acknowledged that existence in a patriarchal society might be deleterious for each of the sexes. It is being tentatively suggested that the high incidence of violent acts between men and women

points toward an endemic phenomenon that does not lend itself to easy solution but for which neither party is to blame. This writer is aware of the snappy feminist retort to the repugnance of the ideas being advanced in this section which might be heard to be suggesting that because violence is widespread, and because violence is normal, the man must get off unscathed. The feminist retort would evolve to a point where the present writer would be seen to be accepting and buying into ideas of patriarchal dominion which have stood since the beginning of time and which have been the context in which abuse and its reported prevalence have emerged. This writer recognizes the validity of this criticism. However, if the reader wishes to have some chance of transcending the theoretical quagmire and muddle on this issue, then the writer begs an opportunity to be understood in terms of the thesis he is attempting to evolve. The writer asks simply that he be furnished with the opportunity to present his narrative to the gentle listening ear of the reader. The significance of listening in this polarized circumstance is crucial and cannot be overstated. Should the reader then prefer the traditional feminist voice, the reader can, as a matter of course, revert to this voice.

A final remark of note in this section would be related to the notion that nobody is to blame for violence. This does not exclude the responsibility that both men and women have in this regard. Rather, it points to the existence of a subtle distinction between the non-assumption of responsibility and being blameworthy. This distinction might have to do with the awareness of that responsibility. It is for this reason that this writer feels that even the virulent

feminist writers, MacKinnon and Miller (1987), write about the **unintentionally** oppressive male.

### **The Evolution of a Male Voice**

The previous discussion begins to import that perhaps both the male and the female have suffered at the hands of a patriarchal macrocosm. This argument does not for a moment presume that because both men and women have lived with patriarchy, they are again by definition and mystification equal. It does import though that while the female experience of the patriarchy has been illuminated in a very articulate fashion, the male experience has been rather ignored.

It is only in very recent times (mid 1990's) that concern has begun to be articulated concerning the absence of a male voice in both the theory (with the exception of those that for fear of being politically incorrect, simply climbed onto the feminist bandwagon) and even in the therapy room.

Recent developments in this regard include the establishment of a crisis service for the perpetrators of violence in conjunction with the already existent woman's shelter in Calgary. This recently documented ecological event seems to be indicative of a trend to recognize the struggle of the so-called 'abuser'.

At a conference in 1992, delegates began to recognize that it is just possible that the male privileged position might also encompass a tremendous burden for the man in male-female relations (Dienhart & Avis, 1990; Gutsche

et al, 1992). There is also the beginning of a recognition that there needs to be a contribution on the part of men of an articulation of their experience (Nutt, 1990) in terms of not only living in a patriarchal society, but in terms of seeking help within it for being an 'abusive man' (Gutsche et al, 1992; Neal & Slobonik, 1990). It is well documented that the paucity of literature in this regard is concerning (Nutt, 1990).

Further, there was the dawning of a realization that the male experience needed to be understood and that "to see man as the enemy is to confuse the person with the problem" (Adams, 1990, p.40). This led to a development of the notion that there is some possibility that the oppression of the male partner might become an important obstacle to treatment in relationships which are characterized by violence (Flemons, 1989; Gutsche et al, 1992; Terry, 1992).

With the emergence of a concern about the absence of a male voice and the possibility that the male was in fact also a prisoner (perhaps of a different sort) of modern living, came research by people such as Goldner (in Goldner Penn, Steinberg & Walker et al, 1990) into the use of male metaphors such as sporting analogies to make the therapy room a more tolerable and less oppressive environment for the male, even if he had been violent.

Work done in the early part of the 90's seems to be more listening and gentle in relation to the male dilemma that it was when cogent arguments were trotted out in respect of defining the centrality of the gender issue. Current self reflection by family therapists and perhaps even those of the formerly virulent feminist persuasion is beginning to consider that women would want to

avoid the mistakes perpetrated by men in the way of critique and fault finding and that the focus might now be on mutual empowerment or liberation from the shackles of Patriarchy (Gutsche et al, 1992).

### **What Might the Male Voice Say?**

It seems apparent from the literature reviewed to date that the need for a male narrative on the issues of gender and power exists. What follows are those articulations that have begun to emerge in the family therapy literature. It is interesting to note that they are humble in this writer's view and that they are far from as articulate as the feminist voice that has evolved out of the meetings between women concerning their entrapment. The present writer elects to confine himself to reporting those articulations that have been fragmentarily presented in the journals thus far. An evolution of this segment of the literature into something a little more substantial will be one of the research tasks in the present study.

The male voice might, in the first instance, begin to report how, while overtly it has always seemed to be in control, it has covertly felt extremely out of control (Doan et al, 1992). That the injunction of the patriarchal heritage made demands upon the male that he be in control and that he be the ultimate protector, provider, boss, and managing director, but that these demands were extremely difficult to live up to. "Paradoxically, many abusive men feel disempowered while acting all-powerful and controlling" (Doan et al, 1992, p.23).

The male voice might go on to suggest that while women were accustomed to the male way of doing things, they always had access to a female language of intuition and understanding. Simultaneously, living in a patriarchal society has deprived the male of a language of compassion (in relation to self and other) and understanding and now this language has to be learned. It is for this reason that the present writer notes with interest Goldner's (1988) claim that during the 60's women began to meet and to dialogue about their experience in a patriarchal society. In spite of their apparent overt vulnerability and oppression, women appear to have been able to evolve a language of understanding in relation to each other as well as a language of defiance in relation to men. The man on the other hand seems not have access to a voice of understanding for his vulnerable parts in spite of his overt coping and dominating stance and the legitimization of the same by patriarchal society (Doan et al, 1992). Perhaps equally significantly, the man lacks a forceful voice of defiance in addition to which, should this begin to emerge, it is quickly smothered as the archetypal abusive behaviour. This is manifest in the state of the literature on the subject where men have either acquiesced and towed the feminist point of view or brooded and raged silently about the problem of gender in psychotherapy.

Men might say further that they feel extremely uncertain on the emotional terrain and in relation to the question of intimacy and that they might wish, therefore, to control the depth and intensity of intimacy at all costs (Ball et al, 1995). Men might say that learning to negotiate with women in the intimacy

realm is frightening; that learning to accept critique from women is something that they are not really equipped for in terms of their former dominion status and that anger is a useful, although damaging way of traversing this difficult terrain (Ball et al, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; B. White, 1989).

### **A Discussion on the Humanity and Universality of Anger**

Perhaps one of the most useful post conference reflections to emerge from the overlapping conversations about men, women, and power was the notion that conference delegates were able to experience their own anger in relation to the cases presented and that this anger was sometimes so subtly experienced and articulated that only Maturana's (in Rao, 1986) definition of violence as the inadvertent violence of an imposed opinion could pertain. The present writer views it as pivotal though, as do the conference convenors, that anger is not necessarily pathological and that it is endemic in the relations between the sexes (Doan et al, 1992) – so much so that conference goers were hard-pressed to avoid it.

Pick (undated) expresses her sheer surprise at being asked to speak at an analytic conference on the topic of anger being defined as one of the seven deadly sins. Pick goes on to suggest that anger is a normal response to vexation and distress and that a society that prescribes that anger is a sin, does not make room for anger as a healthy protest. It is suggested by this writer that male aggression – while it might be inappropriately expressed and directed toward women – is healthy protest against the tyranny of patriarchy.

Yet this expression of anger cannot be directed at the patriarchs who really deserve it since by definition they are absent. That the anger is directed at women instead is inexcusable. However, the nature of the transaction between the three pillars of the system, patriarchy, the individual man, and the individual woman creates a bind for men that is inescapable.

Clearly, the feminist is going to argue that beating of a woman in a patriarchal society is the one act most removed from the healthy protest referred to by Pick (undated). This is acknowledged by the present writer. However, this writer will persist with the discussion for two reasons. The first is that Pick's discussion reveals that anger is a given in society and that this goes some way towards accounting for the perpetual annoyance that exists between the sexes. It is noteworthy that Gutsche et al (1992) as well as Doan et al (1992) all espouse a similar position when they suggest that when there is a meeting between people to address the issues that exist between men and women, anger can easily be "in charge [and that] people act in very similar ways and experience very similar feelings ... whether these people are therapists or 'violent' clients" (Doan et al, 1992, p.26). More importantly, the discussion will begin to turn toward giving the male experience of anger and therefore the male voice some expression. Again, it cannot be argued for a moment that the explanations furnished as the male voice is articulated exonerates the abusive male. However, it does shed some light on the manner in which patriarchy traps and imprisons the male and this in turn will be helpful in elucidating the model for understanding the male-female violence situation and for intervening in it, which will be advanced later.



### **The Male Bind: Patriarchy has Men by the Balls**

Pick (undated) asserts that anger is frequently used as a manner in which the individual might deal with frustrated wishes concerning demands, the wish to dominate, the wish to possess and as a response to being thwarted in any of these efforts. Pick goes on to suggest that anger cannot exist independently of at least a modicum of desire to destroy the object of that anger which is the source of frustration, envy and the like.

The present writer would suggest that it is the capacity of the woman to use different languages – to operate in terms of the male vernacular of protest but also to own a language of her own which is more compassionate (Gutsche et al, 1992); that it is the capacity of the woman to forgive ; that it is the capacity of the woman to dialogue with her sisters and mother where men struggle to do the same at the emotional level (Gutsche et al, 1992); and that it is the capacity of the woman to choose a mate who can then be discarded as she progresses without that mate and with her equals to become a mother, that constitute the sources of the envy of women by men and the need on the part of men, therefore, to have dominion over women. It is speculated from the male narrative offered by this writer that these, among many other issues, are the inherent sex differences (themselves) that Goldner refers to in her 1988 paper.

Now, the interesting attribution made about the expression of anger (Pick, undated) is that just like the infant, the raging adult seeks to “annihilate

the alleged cause of that anger” (p.4). However, in the act of annihilation, the infant and the adult experience acute fear of retribution which seems to be proportionate with the amount of rage expressed by the infant or adult in the first instance. The interesting diction used by Pick to encapsulate how the attempt at annihilation of the object and the subsequent retaliation by it feels to the infant is that “that is hell ... a void in which there is no grace ... the space is filled with demons who torture and pay no heed to his cries of agony” (p.4). And the only deliverance from this hell is the evidence on the part of the other that she is capable of managing the infant’s rage without it destroying her. If this cannot be achieved, then the infant feels himself to be at the mercy of a cruel, tyrannical mother.

It is this writer’s hunch that deeply embedded in patriarchy’s very nature is a fundamental envy of the woman. This envy might have to do with the fact that the woman is perceived as more enduring, more creative, more resilient in terms of what has been done to her at a previous point on a recursive spiral, more life-giving and more dependable than the man. And this in turn might have to do with the role of the woman (not socialized but determined by her biological characteristics) in such essential functions as carrying the foetus and playing the pivotal role in early child rearing whereas the man is dispensable following his excited contribution to this more enduring sequence of events. [It could be that the manner in which patriarchy has attempted to deal with the overt biologically based dispensability of the male, is actually to invert it making the woman the ‘easy lay’ or sexual object that can be discarded at the whim of the male (Goldner, 1988)].

The reader's attention is drawn here to the manner in which the patriarchal envy is based upon constructions of woman that are in part, as a function of biology, not negotiable, but which are in part a function of the patriarchal definitions of women as "enduring homemakers while man fucks his way indiscriminately through life" and the like. It is this writer's view that this primitive envy is at the root of the man's dilemma. When excited in the male, it can be the source of violent acting out and rage. The function of the rage, it would seem, is to destroy the constructed object which has been paradoxically imbued with certain envy exciting qualities, to dismantle it, to subjugate it, and to annihilate it. Yet the catch resides in the fact that after destroying the object, the individual male who is reported in the literature to be "disempowered while acting all-powerful" (Doan et al, 1992, p.23) still needs the destroyed object to tell him that the annihilation was competently carried out. To create a concrete analogy for this circumstance, it could be likened to the male who derives immense sexual satisfaction from hurting and annihilating his partner ... the more she screams while he fucks her to bits the better ... yet when all is said and done (screamed and done), he still needs her to be intact enough to tell him he did it well. Placed in the context of the more theoretical discussion, the subjugation of the woman in a patriarchal society is fraught with complexity for the individual man who has to tolerate his real vulnerability and dependency.

Goldner (1988) suggests that the manner in which the male deals with

difference is to escalate it. The present writer would suggest that this statement needs to be revised and brought in line with the more benign assertion that to see men as the enemy is to mistake the person for the problem (Adams, 1990). The suggestion here is that the problem for both men and women is patriarchy and that the unenviable position of the man is the living with the inevitable consequences of his attacks on woman which patriarchy teaches will result in triumph. In fact, patriarchy is mistaken and the man only realizes this when he is compelled to ask his partner for forgiveness (and the awareness of vulnerability and dependence which emerges at these times) – if all is forgiven, the envy at the root of patriarchy is excited afresh as the magnanimous position of the woman is reinforced. Ultimately, the man still depends on the victim for reassurance that he did it well.

What is being suggested is that the relationship between men and woman embedded in patriarchal society is an extremely difficult one for the man in that he is compelled to impose his dominance (TEMPORARY UNILATERAL CONTROL) through rage as an expression of his apparent competence and control, yet he is covertly dependent upon the object he is attempting to destroy.

Until now, formulations about the male-female interactions around violence have been far too simplistic and have centered around notions such as the need to communicate worthlessness to the other (Hyden, 1995) and three phase models such as the calm, the build up, and the make-up phases suggested by Flemons (1989). These models all account for parts of a

potential sequence of events in the abusive transaction but all fail to conceptualize it in a fully circular fashion.

Consequently, not only does the man try to, and actually convey worthlessness to his partner as a function of a patriarchal injunction that he barely understands at the conscious level, but he also depends heavily on the woman to confirm his assertions. This she would need to do in a paradoxical fashion: first, she would need to be submissive and deferent in order to illustrate her lack of worth and to confirm the content of the male message; second, she would need to forgive the male for what he has perpetrated, illustrating how powerful she actually is (in a covert sense) reinforcing his need to subjugate her. The more forgiving and understanding the woman can be when the offender asks for forgiveness, the more intense the envy of the magnanimous object becomes and so the contextual spiral moves through time.

Put slightly differently, the transmitted envy of the woman's perceived power results in acting out in the real relationship. This gives rise to a brief and extremely pyrrhic triumph. Given the hollowness of the triumph, other imperatives are acted out such as the need to make good and to extricate the self from the hell referred to by Pick (undated). In short, the need to be reassured that no major harm has been inflicted. This in turn only serves to fuel the fundamental envy as the source of relief is also the origin of the envy.

Now this little foray into the realms of psychoanalysis and object relations is recognized by the present writer to be only one possible construction about

the male-female violent transaction and in fact, there might be no truth in it at all for anybody other than the present writer. However, what it does do is that it illustrates one construction of how thoroughly bound and imprisoned the male can feel and might have begun to furnish something of a male narrative. Perhaps most significantly, it illustrates how the issue of gender in a patriarchal system can be extremely imprisoning for protagonists in that system and how this imprisonment can be paradoxical in nature. Whether this construction is legitimate for the reader or not, it does point toward the work of Elkaim (1986) with couples, who advances a model which, with some modification, might be an extremely useful tool for understanding couples' transactions around violence. In addition, it might point the way toward an intervention model.

**An Alternative Title to this Text – 'The Man, the Woman,  
and the age-old fart**

It is this writer's view that the beauty of the analytic model is the acute attention it pays to apparently innocuous detail. Pick (undated) discusses a lengthy case study of a patient who was unable, from time to time, to desist from flatulating in the presence of his wife. This behaviour seemed particularly acute at times when he was angry with her and the oddest thing about the flatulence was that the patient felt helpless to stop its continuous stream, even when consciousness indicated it. There was a part of this patient that enjoyed persecuting his wife with the gas attacks but another part

felt victimized in turn. Toward the end of her paper, Pick (undated, p.9) writes: : "Is my patient's behaviour sinful? Some would say so ; others would say 'its just a part of married life.'"

The present writer feels that the noxious fart which is in some ways innocuous, but which lingers in many relationships, embodies the dilemma faced in relation to the couple's violence issue. There seems to be an at times lingering, at other times smouldering, and at still other times an explosive possibility for noxious events. These events are ever-present although they vary in intensity and frequency. There is always concern about how much of it is natural, and how much is pathological. By examining the small eruptions, the writer can still stay in the room without taking drastic measures. These examinations might yield solutions to those big bangs that are completely unacceptable. Certainly, the business of farting exemplifies the perpetual niggles between partners and one might even go as far as to examine how a patriarchal society condones such vile behaviour for men and how this has only fallen within the legitimate purview of women in recent years since the rise of feminism. Even more certainly, it is an easier business to resolve in the abstractional domain – in the theory of farting where the faintest remnants of the real thing linger – and this examination of how specialists relate to one another around the issues might yield rich information about the in-vivo situation. The fart can be taken lightly in non-lethal doses and might even be vaguely pleasant/tolerable/amusing, yet at other doses it can also be lethal. It is fair to infer that even our earliest ancestors carried this problem between them.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MALE STRUGGLE TO INDIVIDUATE

#### Some Notes on Psychoanalytic Formulation on Gender

“It is important to understand clearly that the concepts of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are amongst the most confused to occur in science.” (Freud, 1905, p.219). It would seem that these words encapsulate the essence of the problem that the present writer is attempting to address in this text. What follows is a fairly careful exploration of the various notions about the evolution of both the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’ that have been presented over approximately 80 years in the analytic literature. The writer wishes to acknowledge, at the inception of this discussion, the huge intellectual debt that is owed to Breen (1993) who both edited and introduced the publication The gender conundrum from which much of the content presented here is drawn. However, unlike Breen, the present writer is significantly less interested in the analytic detail involved in psychosexual development attended to by many of the contributors (Aisenstein, 1984; Bernstein, 1990; Blos, 1984; Britton, 1989; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964, 1976, 1981; Gillespie, 1969; Glasser, 1985; Limentani, 1989) to the aforementioned text. Rather, the present writer will attempt to draw out what he believes to be the implications of these authors’



comments for the difficulties between the sexes (genders) alluded to in the previous discussion. In order that some shape and form might be lent to the discussion that follows, the writer will attempt to present the scaffolding for the discussion briefly here. The discussion will attempt the following :-

1. To present contradictory notions from the analytic literature on the evolution of female sexuality or femininity, concluding that it is these very contradictions that are at the heart of the 'mystery' of woman and that they are responsible for a richness inherent in the evolution of femininity.
2. To derive from these notions those aspects that the present writer feels are instructive in terms of the themes that he is attempting to work with in his entire text. Specifically, notions are attended to that will demonstrate the contradictory richness that would appear to be located in the evolution of the female, suggesting ultimately that hers is a position of privilege rather than one of disadvantage.
3. To present notions on the evolution of maleness from the analytic literature, starting at the Freudian conception of the evolution of maleness as a straightforward task, and moving toward the neo-Freudian and Kleinian position which suggests that male development is fraught with complexities and contradictions that are more difficult for the little man to negotiate and which therefore locate him relatively precariously in relation to his female counterparts in respect of certainty about maleness.

4. To illustrate, by inference, that the male position is developmentally a more precarious one than that of the female by virtue of its simplicity and as a function of the threats and anxieties inherent in it.
5. To ultimately explore the notion that the differences between the sexes in respect of their respective developmental situations can be brought centre stage in understanding the annoyance rage continuum in intimate heterosexual relationships and that it is the very primitive envy of the man that probably underlies this continuum.

The writer has already used the Freudian term 'psychosexual' (Breen, 1993; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1984) in his introductory paragraph and wishes to expand upon this notion a little further in the interests of clarity. An insensitive reading of the analytic works would suggest that they are predominantly about sexual developments and anxieties and that sexuality per se has little to do with gender in that the former might be said to refer to biological wherewithal whereas the latter has to do with a constellation of feelings about maleness or femaleness which are not necessarily related to biological sex assignment. For this writer, the notion of psychosexual development is pivotal in that it embodies the extent to which development is a sort of dialectic interchange between mental set and biological equipment which cumulatively gives rise to the notions of masculinity and femininity.

While much of what will be presented here will center around psychosexual development, it ought to be clear from Freud (1905) that analytic theorizing has everything to do with gender.

A final comment in this stage setting exercise would be that the writer will, where possible, endeavour to point out the overlap between notions presented in this chapter and notions that were presented in the chapter on systemic approaches to the gender issue.

According to Breen (1993), there exists an inherent tension between the various interpreters of Freud's writings with some suggesting that he was by and large a naturist and that men and women have been ascribed "an inescapable biological destiny" (Breen, 1993, p.1), while others have elected a more nurturist position in this regard advancing the notion that gender is constructed over a period of time. The writer points out that a similar tension might exist covertly in the systemic literature, with writers such as Maturana and Varela (1987) invoking notions such as structure determinism and biological essence as relatively immutable entities which are therefore not open to instructive interaction (and why instructive interaction therefore constitutes violence) on the one hand, and writers such as Anderson and Goolishian's (1988) suggestion that human systems are largely defined linguistically.

Breen (1993) does, however, point out that this tension in the interpretation of Freud's work is probably not something that can be debated

away, but rather something that is instructive regarding the essence of gender formation. One might argue that what is being suggested here is that an either/or disjunctive position is being understood in a both/and way (Hoffman, 1981) and that rather than to shy away from difference, the same is to be embraced as instructive about the essence of the observed phenomenon (Breen, 1993; Selvini, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1980).

Nowhere is the tension between the biological and the linguistic more acute than in the analytic writings on women. In fact, Breen (1993) suggests that much of the work done on the psychosexual development of women has attempted to either “resolve the ‘mystery’ of woman by grounding female sexuality in a biological perspective or, on the contrary, by pulling it right out of this into a linguistic approach” (Breen, 1993, p.1). It is suggested that this very tension might embody the essence of the mystery (Breen, 1993), and it is this writer’s contention that in the nature of this essential tension lies one of the fundamental distinctions between the sexes that might lie at the very root of the annoyance/rage continuum which is thought to exist between the sexes in practice from time to time and in the family therapy literature almost perpetually.

According to Freud (1905, 1925), masculinity and femininity begin to evolve from the moment at which the child is able to be aware of anatomical difference and it is this awareness that then comes to embody and characterize the meanings that each child attributes to experience. For the

little boy entering Oedipus his penis brings about the phantasy that the same might be lost or castrated; for the little girl, it is suggested that she begins to experience penis envy which compels her to turn away from her mother and toward her father "in her search for what she lacks" (Breen, 1993, p.3).

Irrespective of whether one believes implicitly in Oedipus or not, what does present itself as an important idea is that anatomy, rather than biology (Breen, 1993), is a fundamental distinction between the sexes, a given about which relatively little can be done and that once this basic distinction is recognized, it is up to each sex to begin to construct and construe meanings in respect of the anatomical given. "For Freud there is no natural sexuality, it is always psychosexuality, always a construction ... the anatomical difference, not in itself but through the meaning it takes on will shape object relations" (Breen, 1993, pp. 3-4). While systemically minded thinkers might object to the specific meanings that will be debated below in respect of early development, it ought to be relatively clear that the idea that meaning is constructed around certain anatomical givens is not a radical departure from systems theory and that there is an area of relative overlap between the analytic and the systemic. The notion that washing machines wash and toasters toast (Efran & Lukens, 1985) is certainly a mirroring of the extent to which anatomy or structure is largely determining, and the notion that human systems are linguistic systems shaped by the dialogical domain (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988) or verse (Efran & Lukens, 1985) in which they function are illustrative of the nature and extent of this overlap.

The writer wishes to become a little more specific at this point by beginning to present some of the analytic ideas about the sorts of meanings of phantasies that are ascribed to the anatomical givens for women by analytic writers and by women in relation to their own anatomies if these writers are, by and large, accurate in their theses. The writer will then draw out some of the implications that he feels inhere in these theories of early development for his own thesis.

Psychoanalysis cannot elucidate the intrinsic nature of what in conventional or in biological phraseology is termed "masculine" and "feminine" : it simply takes over the two concepts and makes them the foundation of its work. When we attempt to reduce them further, we find masculinity vanishing into activity and femininity into passivity, and that does not tell us enough." (Freud, 1905, p.171).

For Breen (1993) there is an understanding that to suggest that female anatomy is exclusively receptive and therefore passive and that male anatomy is intrusive and therefore characteristic of the activity of maleness, is to make a serious error because, as Freud (1931) points out "we far too readily identify activity with maleness and passivity with femaleness" (p. 106). In fact, the present writer would go as far as to suggest that this sort of attributional error is characteristic of patriarchy which delineates an active, prominent, and protrusional role for men, and a passive, confined, and reclusive role for women. What clearly needs to be understood in this writer's view is the

extent to which the female position is more than a simple case of passivity. It is to this issue that the writer now turns.

“It is in relation to women that the disjunction between biology and psychology is greatest” (Breen, 1993, p.1) in the analytic literature. As the little girl moves into a recognition of her anatomy there is the early suggestion by Freud (1905) that she experiences penis envy as she notices that she does not have this appendage. Coupled with this perceived lack comes a turning away from the mother who is indicted for this lack and who is seen as responsible for it, and a movement toward the father who can furnish what is missing (Breen, 1993). It is at about this point that the feminists take strong exception as the signification of lack is an overtly abhorrent idea from which patriarchy has made much capital. The writer suggests that the presentation of ideas which follows will present somewhat startling findings in respect of conventional conceptions of gender that have been espoused by patriarchy, and that these conceptions are closer to a feminist position on Freud than a cursory glance at the phrase ‘anatomy is destiny’ might suggest.

“In the case of the girl, a dual perspective is clearest : her body is her destiny, but her psychosexuality does not simply parallel her biological destiny,” whereas “this is not questioned for the little boy since psychosexual and biological tally” (Breen, 1993, p.4). And, as already argued, a simple characterization of femaleness along the lines of passivity and lack is fallacious and places the concept of femininity beyond grasp in a vanished domain (Breen, 1993). What the thesis presented by this writer will hope to

demonstrate is that women, as an artefact of their development which is characterized by bifocality (Breen, 1993) and exposure to multiple and complex contexts, has access to a broader repertoire of functions than men whose development is more simple in terms of the natural induction (with seemingly less tension between anatomy and psyche) into interpersonal relationships and whose development is more precarious than was first thought to be the case. "Women he considers to be more bisexual than men because of the initial homosexual phase of attachment" (Breen 1993, p.5).

If one were to tacitly accept penis envy as a signification of lack, then one would be simultaneously failing to recognize the bi-focality in terms of femaleness which derives not only from the need for a less than anatomically defined view, but also from Freud's subsequent explorations into the hidden civilization of female pre-oedipal development. Prior to these explorations by Freud, analytic writers, constrained by a narrower view were making case notes to the effect that

it will be agreed that there can be no misunderstanding about this statement of hers [this woman patient] : "Often when I am restless and don't know what to do with myself I have a feeling that I would like to ask my mother to give me something that she cannot give me". (Van Ophuijsen, 1924, p.40)

Freud's (1931) exploration of the pre-oedipal world of the little girl revealed a complexity that prior to that time he had never been able to



envisage. "Freud's choice of imagery- the discovery of the Minoan- Mycenaean civilization hidden behind the Greek one – must attest to how this phase came as a surprise but especially how he felt it had an all encompassing logic of its own" (Breen, 1993, p.6). What, simply put, this discovery amounted to was a discovery of the profound significance of the early attachment between the little girl and her mother. A discovery of a homosexual attachment which predates the oedipal striving for heterosexual relations.

Breen (1993) suggests that the discovery of this early hidden civilization in the female developmental cycle is accepted by psychoanalysts on both sides of the biology versus construction debate. What, however, is contested is the extent to which this early phase could be seen as either receptive or phallic. The present writer wishes to infer that it is of less importance to establish which of these two positions (young girl as phallic or receptive pre-oedipally) is 'actually' valid than it is for there to be a possible recognition that the young girl might have access to both domains of experience – the phallic (active) and the receptive (passive).

While what has been presented thus far is the essence of the debate around the extent to which anatomy is a determining factor in psychic functioning prior to say, 1940, the writer will now present some further ideas which emerged in the analytic discourse following what might be referred to as a dormant period between 1935 and 1960 (Breen, 1993).

In the early 1960's, perhaps with the overt rise of the feminist movement,

this debate re-emerged with American analytic thinkers reverting to the notion that anatomy was, in fact, largely determining and with many in the French school adopting the position that there was an “independence of the psychological construction of femininity from the biological path.” (Breen, 1993, p.8). As suggested earlier by the present writer as well as by Breen (1993), it is thought that a helpful understanding of the feminine can only be evolved by embracing the contradiction between these two points of departure as a comment on the essence of the observed phenomenon and not as a split between the correct and the incorrect way of perceiving. Below appear a few important ideas and their implications for what the writer is attempting to achieve in this chapter.

Lacan’s (1966) work offers valuable insights in respect of femininity in that it represents a return to the centrality of language as a pivotal force in psychoanalysis. While Lacan is seen to return to Phallic Monism and to the centrality of castration in Freud’s theory, he places powerful emphasis on the negation of the real anatomical organ. Instead, Lacan suggests that penis envy has to do with symbolic and perceived lack on the part of both little boys and little girls and that it is a metaphor that signifies the loss on the part of the child of the union with the mother and it simultaneously signifies an entry into culture through language. What is feminine and what is masculine ought not to be sought in material anatomical reality, but are to be understood as two opposite poles in language where the former has been linguistically

constructed to be the negative, the other or the lacking pole and where the latter has been constructed to be the positive, the possessing, or the self pole. Penis envy is therefore not seen by Lacan as an attack by Freud on the actual inferiority of women, but that it is rather a comment on the phallogentric nature of the organization of the linguistic system within which Freud worked and with which he was in touch (Breen, 1993).

Of value in the ideas espoused by Lacan (1966) is that he makes provision for acknowledging the centrality of language in the gender issue. For this writer this implies then the absolute importance of there being provision in the therapeutic domain for both the male and the female voices. Perhaps most importantly, the work of Lacan speaks of the crucial importance of not confusing patriarchy with men per se which frequently then subordinates the male voice or co-opts it onto the female side of the debate.

(It is not the man's or) [this writer's parentheses] Lacan's theory which is phallogentric, but what they have brought to light is the phallogentrism in linguistic structures and hence in the construction of masculinity and femininity which the child takes on when he becomes a subject through becoming a speaking being (Breen, 1993, p.12).

This would then seem to point toward the notion alluded to in the previous chapter by this writer that both the male and the female are recipients/victims of patriarchy.

While Lacan's (1966) contribution was made in France, in the United

States the findings of the sex researchers Masters and Johnson were contributing to the physiological knowledge in respect of the sexual functioning of women (Breen, 1993).

The analyst Sherfey (1966) was particularly taken with the Masters and Johnson finding in respect of female orgasm to the effect that "the clitoris is always involved in orgasm, whatever the source of stimulation and that the female's physiologic responses to effective sexual stimulation develop with consistency regardless of the source of the psychic or physical sexual stimulation" (Breen, 1993, p.12). Sherfey (1966) therefore proposed the impossibility of the separation of vaginal from clitoral orgasm as was the demand of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Needless to say, counterpoints to this position were quick to emerge from within analytic circles and it was suggested, in defence of the classical Freudian position, that "the inaccessibility of the vagina in childhood permits only limited priming of this organ" (Kerstenberg, 1968, p.419) and that there could be a maturation into a full vaginal sexual response in the integrated adult. Another response to Sherfey (1966) came from Benedek (in Breen, 1993) who proposed that "a woman's sexual identity is invested more in her aspiration to bear children and be a mother than in orgasm" (p. 13).

Again, the present writer is of the opinion that a resolution of this debate is not the point but that a recognition that women might have access to both vaginal and clitoral realms of functioning is. Perhaps further still might be the Lacanian type inference that symbolically (ignoring the anatomical reality of the clitoris and the vagina) women might not only have the capacity for

access to the active and goal directed ('clitoral') possibilities for functioning, but that they simultaneously have the capacity for deeper, more sustaining, functioning. If one looks at the clitoris and the vagina as simple distinctions in the linguistic domain rather than as anatomical realities, then this might suggest a collective awareness of the flexibility of function within the grasp of the feminine linguistic distinction and the extent to which this flexibility is transferred to the woman with her initiation into interpersonal relations. The present author feels that the female's capacity to function in both the 'clitoral domain' as well as the 'vaginal domain' contributes markedly to the broadness of her functional repertoire in adult life.

The present writer suggests further that a knowledge of both the homosexuality which was an integral part of the pre-oedipal phase of development (Breen, 1993) and the heterosexuality which is implicit in the girl's oedipal struggle, equip her phenomenally well in terms of being able to embody both activity and passivity, forcefulness and nurturance in adult functioning.

Finally, the present writer wishes to consider briefly some of the contributions to the post 1960 debate by Chassegeut-Smirgel (1964), McDougal (1964), and Grunberger (1964) which go to the issue of the female having access not only to an oedipal drama significantly more benign than that experienced by the little boy (Meyer et al, 1989), but to the vast pre-oedipal continent of homosexual experience "which is of such

structuring importance and distinct from, though connected to, the subsequent heterosexual relationship" (Breen, 1993, p.6).

According to Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964) all the contributors to the text which she edits write extensively on penis envy which is at the heart of the Freud-Jones debate. All the authors in her collection of papers reject the notion that the penis envy is the "initiator of femininity" and look at it rather as some sort of psychic defence. The nature of the defences falls beyond what the present writer is attempting to achieve but he has elected to mention one of the defensive functions which might assist him to make his point most eloquently and that is that penis envy has been understood as a wish for an object which might help the little girl to make reparation to her mother and to remain her object of desire (McDougal, 1964). Thus, the little girl has had access to a mother-daughter relationship even prior to the advent of 'father'. While Grunberger (1964) makes comments on the nature of the conflicts that beset the little girl prior to, and as part of Oedipus, the real value in these comments for the present writer is that they reflect the duality of the experience afforded to the little girl who is both a beneficiary of pre-oedipal satisfactions received from the mother (and although Grunberger (1964) suggests that these are at times despized, they are none the less there) and who is subsequently a little person in relationship to an oedipal father (Grunberger, 1964).

Chasseguet-Smirgal (1964) suggests that a glitch in development might give rise to a difficulty in the woman feeling that she might be able to achieve

in fields which take on “unconscious phallic significance” (Breen, 1993, p.10) or, in the present writer’s view, fields which patriarchy delineates not to be for women. This state of affairs is characterized by the confinement of pleasure to the clitoris only, with the vagina remaining uncharted territory. By implication then though, less interrupted and more ‘normal’ development will result, once again, in the little girl and ultimately the mature woman having had experience of both the clitoral and vaginal domains in respect of their respective most narrow and most profound, broad meanings.

Thus far, the writer hopes to have established that the development of the little girl is pervaded by contradictions and tensions in respect of her anatomy and the meanings assigned to it, some of which are congruent and concordant, others of which are less congruent with the anatomically assigned sex. Ultimately though, the point for the present writer is that the feminine embodies both the capacity for active and passive functions. For frenetic and goal directed clitoral manipulation directed toward narcissistic gratification which excludes the man but which is symbolic of highly active and proactive behaviour, to the notion of the childbearer-mother for whom orgasm is only of secondary importance which is symbolic of the more passive and nurturant aspects of the feminine. It is certainly not a question of which of the positions is most accurate: rather there ought to be a recognition of the bifocality of femininity and the extent to which the woman is located in a privileged position with historical access to both sets of experience and the opportunity to function in the future under a constellation of different conditions from the

boardroom to the nursery. Montrelay (in Breen, 1993) suggests that there is a contradiction and co-existence between a phallic and a concentric character to the feminine. Breen (1993, p.22) suggests that “a contradiction structures the feminine unconscious” and that the “way forward is to speak of a duality in feminine sexuality”. Ultimately, the Freudian and Kleinian conceptions of female sexuality might form a dialectic in which simultaneously two oedipal conflicts are lived out (Braunschweig & Fain, 1971) – the one is “quasi-biological and linked to the maternal role ... which minimizes the role of the man, with the penis being experienced as being inside the mother (Kleinian), the other which enhances the role of the clitoris and the subordination of maternity to paternity” (Breen, 1993, p.23).

Attention is now turned to the issue of masculinity and its evolution according to the analytic writers. For Freud, there do not appear to be the same plethora of contradictions in respect of the male development of gender as there are for the evolution of femininity as, for the girl, the evolution of femininity is an artefact of a lengthy process which might have a masculinity associated with it in its early stages whereas for the little boy masculinity has a more natural place in development (Breen, 1993).

Freud himself suggested the notion of attempting to explore the pre-oedipal function of the boy following the richness of the discoveries made concerning the same in the female but he himself never embarked upon this task. However, this was undertaken by other theorists who came to three realizations in this regard : that the boy's early relationship with the mother



might be characterized by exceedingly aggressive attacks upon her (Segal, 1974); that the boy battled to negotiate more “passive strivings” (Breen, 1993 p.24) toward the mother; and that one feature of pre-oedipal functioning might be an early feminine phase with sexual strivings toward the father (Breen, 1993). The implications of these neo-Freudian discoveries would seem to be that maleness is not as firm, erect, and secure as Freud thought it was (as an artefact of a supposed simple developmental process) and that it has significantly less secure foundations than does femaleness for the woman.

This “complete about face” (Breen, 1993, p.28) in the understanding of maleness evolved from the 1960’s onwards and suggests “the boy’s greater vulnerability in terms of the development of his masculine identity” (Breen, 1993, p.28). In a “classical study” (Breen, 1993, p.28) it was demonstrated that transsexual boys were significantly more inclined to have had mothers who treated them as extensions of themselves and this sort of material behaviour is implicated in the femininity of the subjects (Stoller, 1965).

Greenson (1968) explores a similar notion and suggests that while the little girl needs also to “dis-identify from mother if she is to develop her own unique identity ... her identity with mother helps her establish her femininity” (p.370). In the case of the little boy, there exists a potent fear of re-engulfment by the mother. Consequently, the extent to which the boy is able to free himself from the mother on the one hand, and identity with the father on the other, will determine the extent of his certainty about his maleness (Greenson, 1968). However, whereas for the little girl the early identification with the mother is

facilitatory in the process of identity formation in that they are both cut from the same psychobiological cloth, for the little boy the early identification with the mother might be at least partially inhibiting in that, in a manner of speaking, the place from which the little boy starts off is feminine, and therefore difficult to identify with in nature. Consequently, "it is my contention that men are far more uncertain about their maleness than women are about their femaleness" (Greenson, 1968, p.370).

This leads to what has been referred to as an "intense envy of women (from) behind a façade of contempt" (Breen, 1993, p.25), This writer has already engaged in some exploratory discussion on the nature of envy in the preceding chapter, but feels that a brief look at the basic notions association with envy might be helpful at this juncture. Envy is viewed as being markedly distinct from jealousy in that it is a wanton and gratuitous emotion which is absorbed with coveting what the other has, with possessing the qualities or capabilities of the other without them actually being valued in any truly meaningful or mature way (Segal, 1974). In the case of envy, the greedy 'getting' of the possessions of the other is an end in itself and the 'getter' might not be able to value the desired qualities in a meaningful way. In the case of jealousy on the other hand, the emotion seems to be born out of a longing for a relationship that cannot be had and that, in all likelihood, the longer would have some more mature appreciation of it if he was able to acquire it (Joseph, 1985; Segal, 1974). Because envy is such a primitive emotion associated with gratuitous 'getting', when these efforts to get are

frustrated, there is a phantasy attempt at spoiling, via a mental denigration or physical attack (Joseph, 1985). Put another way, envy gives rise to the enormous difficulty that an individual might have with tolerating the notion that another might have something to offer or to give (Joseph, 1985; Klein, 1957; Segal, 1974). This difficulty with looking-in-the-eye some attribute that is felt to be lacking in the self, frequently takes on a spoiling quality, which ultimately leaves the spoiler with nothing but emptiness: the envy was born out of a perceived lack (emptiness), and after the spoiling of the quality in the other, after its denigration following frustrated attempts to covet, there is little room for the introjection or incorporation of the quality which is now perceived to be in relative tatters as an artefact of the contemptuous attack (Joseph, 1985). Because of its wanton and gratuitous nature, with envy there can be “no extenuating circumstances” (Joseph, 1985, p.182). The extenuating circumstances with jealousy (not under discussion in this document) is that it is at least predicated upon a somewhat less wanton and real appreciation of the object. The only potential mitigating factor in this precarious state of affairs is the possible “contra-identification” (Greenson, 1968) with a male figure which amounts to a substitution and replacement of the mother with the father as a ‘same’ object with which the male child can more readily identify (Glasser, 1985; Loewald, 1951). Even this mitigation is only partially helpful in that it would seem that either (1) fathers cannot offer what mothers can to their sons in terms of gentle understanding or (2) that sons are terrified of this gentle understanding if it is available as an artefact of primitive worries about

the enactment of an extremely early homosexual impulse in relation to the father (LampI-de Groot, 1946) which would also lead to a loss of male identity and symbolic engulfment, or (3) both.

It is for this reason that the present writer argued in the previous chapter that the sorority evolved between women is significantly more nurturant than the fraternities evolved between men and why the likelihood that a female might contact her mother in a distress circumstance is significantly higher than the eventuality that a man might feel sufficiently free to contact his father in a similar such circumstance.

In addition, it might explain why the intervention of reporting an abuse to an agent external to the family (Flemons, 1989) might be the frequently successful intervention that it appears to have been in the past (Flemons, 1989) in that it introduces a watchdog father with whom the abusive man might be able to relate at some level in a containing and mitigating manner even if this is viewed antagonistically by the damaging man: "the role of the father has been increasingly understood as fundamental to psychic functioning in that it is the father who introduces reality between mother and child (wife and abusive, childish, male husband) [my parentheses]" (Breen, 1993, p.30).

Finally, these introductory remarks in respect of envy point to the extent to which the present writer upheld, and continues to uphold, the extent to which he refuses to exonerate the male from culpability in the abusive situation because the annoyance/rage emanating from the envy is without

extenuation. However, the writer does attempt to invoke some understanding of the precarious location of the male between a real or perceived not-good-enough paternal penis (as object for identification) in pre-oedipal development or real father in subsequent life on the one hand, and a mother/wife who is envied and who has the capacity to engulf on the other.

Payne (1936) suggests that the little boy's development might well be more fraught with more complexity than was ever imagined to be the case formerly as an artefact of him needing to transform himself from an individual who initially, in relation to his primary object, was gratified through oral receptive sucking but who subsequently has to re-task this relationship *de novo* into an "active aggressive penetrating and discharging relationship" (Breen, 1993, p.25), whereas the little girl simply needs to displace her oral receptive strivings onto the vagina which is also, at least in part, a receptive organ (Payne, 1936).

This need for 'doing' predicated upon less than solid foundations on the part of the man is distinct from the woman who can simply 'be'. This is not suggesting that women cannot 'do' and that men cannot also 'be' as the writer has already established that to equate masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity is folly (Breen, 1993), but – in conjunction with the entire discussion on this point – it does furnish some rationale or explanatory frame for this writer's assertion in the previous chapter that the man who wishes dearly to 'fuck the woman to bits but who still needs her to be together enough to tell him, when all is said and done, that he did it competently'. This might

be particularly the case when there has not been a good enough identification with the father and the goodness of his penis in the pre-oedipal situation

(Klein, 1932a, 1932b):

On the male element side, identification needs to be based on complex mental mechanisms, mental mechanisms that must be given time to appear, to develop and to become established ... On the female element side, however, identity requires so little mental structure that this primary identity can be a feature from very early, and the foundation of simple being can be laid from the birth date, or before, or soon after ... the male element does while the female element (in males and females) is ... (Winnicott 1971, pp.80-81).

At this juncture the present writer hopes to have illustrated the trend in psychoanalysis since the 1960's to the effect that most psychoanalysts now recognize "the particular fragility of masculine identity" (Breen, 1993, p.36). In addition, this writer hopes to have begun to point to the inherent nature of the tension between the sexes given the non-equivalent developmental paths and that given that "the shaky basis of their (mens') identification with the father ... makes them so reactively contemptuous of women and so envious, unconsciously" (Greenson, 1968, p.373) there is enormous potential for the experiencing of annoyance at the moderate end of the spectrum (well documented in the analytic literature) and for acting out of blind rage at the other end of the continuum (better documented and hyper-reflected upon in the systemic literature to date).

The writer wishes to devote a little more time to a discussion on the envy of women by men prior to progressing, in the next chapter, to an integrated approach to couple's therapy along the annoyance/rage continuum. This approach will be predicated upon a reconciliation of second-order systems theory and the poorly understood (by most systemic thinkers encountered by this writer anyway) more psychodynamic/analytic method of understanding in therapy.

Envy, for Melanie Klein (1957) is perhaps the most primitive and fundamental human emotion (Segal, 1974). While envy was existent long before Klein (1957) began to write on it in the form of Freud's penis envy, it is Klein who brings envy centre stage in human emotional functioning in a wider sense suggesting that one needs to be concerned with envy in the early development of the infant and in other situations such as "man's envy of another's potency or man's envy of the female possessions or position, and women's envy of one another" (Segal, 1974, p.39). It is interesting to note that in Segal's brief and even casual enumeration of envy pervaded circumstances, the three examples cited concur with the literature reviewed to date in this chapter: man's envy of another man's potency would seem to have to do with the premium placed on doing by masculinity and the importance of doing well with an emphasis on competition and friction in the absence of nurturant father-male understanding; man's envy of women and her position or possessions would seem to resonate with the possible envy of men for

women in respect of their access to both orgasm and child-birth, forcefulness and gentility, activity and passivity, and women's envy for other women, more pronounced in this writer's view than man's envy in respect of other men, is noteworthy only in that there is no mention in this casual list of examples of systematic envy of men by women. It would seem that even when women have been deprived of access to political and economic power, the steadfast capacity to be (emerging out of the bedrock identification with the primary object who is also feminine) has assisted with the warding off of envy and the silent knowing that if society could be transformed then, as a matter of course they would not just be, but be able to fulfil the male function that, until that time they had been deprived of. In addition, Greenson (1968) observes that in view of the reported pre-Kleinian emphasis in penis envy and in view of the extent to which women have been marginalized and held in contempt by patriarchy, a study of transsexuals (group of patients who feel that they would wish to have the anatomical and sexual functions of the opposite sex and that they are trapped in bodies that do not concur with their gender sets about the same) should probably yield a high incidence of women wanting to be men. Interestingly enough, a study of 100 patients over a nine year period yielded that more than 66% of transsexuals studied were actually men presenting with wishes to be women, anatomically (Stoller, 1965). Further similar studies report even higher ratios of men wanting to be sexually reassigned as women (Paul, 1965). A similar trend is found in respect of transvestic fetishism (men



who covertly dress up in items of women's clothing but who, overtly, appear to be relatively bound to male sexual functioning), only the numbers in this regard appear to be even more compelling with almost 100% of presenting patients being men (Greenson, 1968). Greenson concludes with the suggestion that

it is true that my female patients envy men in a variety of ways, particularly their possession of a penis as well as their greater social, economic and political advantages. However, I am impressed by the fact that on an earlier, more deeply unconscious level, my male patients harbor an intense envy of the female, particularly the mother. Each sex is envious of the opposite sex; but the male's more covert envy underneath his exterior façade of contempt, seems to be particularly destructive ... (p.259).

In her paper entitled Envy in everyday life Joseph (1985) suggests that the "broader sociological implications of envy" could best be described as "immense" (p.190). The present writer is certain that amongst other issues, the gender issue is being referred to here. Joseph goes on to explain that the "male homosexual avoids close emotional and physical contact with women" and in so doing, "he does not have to face up to a strong awareness of differences that could stir up envy and allied anxiety" (Joseph, 1985, p.190). Yet outside of this extreme case of avoidance, lie the cases of men who are simultaneously in need of women but who are covertly envious of them and who, through their exposure to women encounter enormous anxiety and even

annoyance/rage: "the mother's body is a permanent anxiety object for him, but this also increases the attraction of women because it is an incentive to overcome his anxiety" (Breen, 1993, p.27).

If there is a fatal flaw in the heterosexual man, and the present writer suggests that there is, then it has to do with the sort of bind in which his envy of women leaves him. One of the typical Kleinian defences against envy would be a devaluation of the object of envy or the spoiling of it (Joseph, 1985) in order that the most psychic distance possible be created between the envious person and the object of the envy (Joseph, 1985; Klein, 1957; Segal, 1974). In the abusive circumstances (from the mild annoyance to the explosive and physically deleterious rage) around which this polemic centres, it is the devaluation of women that seems like the most active defence against her perceived goodies and her capacity both to 'do' and to 'be' (Winnicott, 1971). The devaluation might take the form of verbal denigration or even an all out physical attack intended to smite. The difficulty inheres in the fact that the attack is predicated upon the lack of sureness in the male identity (Greenson, 1968). Consequently, if the attack succeeds completely and the woman is completely annihilated, the man is left feeling completely uncontained. Conversely, should the woman survive the attack and forgive the abuser, then it is this very act – the demonstration by the object that it can 'be' in spite of an attack and that it has the further power to magnanimously forgive – that will further excite the primitive envy of the man in respect of the enduring woman who has a mother before her (whom she is most like) and who has herself got the capacity to bear and raise children.

The present writer does not wish to overtax the issue of what lies at the heart, in his view, of the annoyance/rage continuum experienced by men in intimate heterosexual relations and hopes that his basic thesis has been sufficiently supported in terms of the arguments set forth in the previous chapter and the substantial body of analytic literature set forth in this chapter which points to fundamental gender differences and the precariousness of male gender identity. When these two factors, the difference and the male lack (or shakiness), are placed in the same dialogical or experiential domain, the result is a deep and acute envy on the part of the man for the woman which is at times reciprocated but with significantly less intensity. The envy is frequently masked by at least annoyance and contempt, but often times rage which, after the impact of the same has been observed by the male and after his partner has accorded him forgiveness for which he overtly feels most grateful, the envy is only excited with renewed energy and malignancy, perpetuating the couple's violence problem.

The writer openly acknowledges that he has focused much of the intellectual empathy at the man whom he has readily identified as trapped in both this chapter and the preceding one, although considerable attention has been afforded to the feminine position in respect of its analytic aetiology. The writer nervously hopes that his attempt at understanding the male predicament and the concomitant location of the female in a somewhat less bound position, is not another of the Kleinian defences against envy: the

denigration of the self with the concomitant idealization of the other in order to create psychic distance (Joseph, 1985). He sincerely hopes not, but if this does turn out to be the case, his point is still held out to be legitimate – the male (himself) is still exceedingly envious of the position and possession of the feminine gender.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE THERAPIST POSITION

#### **Epistemological Bifocality : The Process of the Therapy**

By now it ought to be exceedingly clear that the present writer is informed by both the systemic and the psychodynamic approaches with regard to the understanding of the annoyance/rage manifestation in intimate heterosexual relationships. In fact, it is suggested that this writer has thus far used the psychodynamic understandings in respect of the autopoietic organization of both men and women to complexify the heretofore polarized debate surrounding whether a truly systemic understanding of couple's violence should be superseded by a more linear, less gender biased conception of the same. What the present writer feels he has accomplished to this point is something of a contribution toward understanding the male's complex position in gender transactions and the extent to which this bound position has been enacted in literature (particularly the systemic literature with a feminist focus). This contribution is in a humble effort to balance the forcefulness of the feminist position which has in this writer's estimation, by and large, exacerbated the annoyance/rage issue by making more of the same. Ultimately, this writer feels he has suggested that one probably ought to gravitate back toward the conventional systemic explanation with an insight

about how each of the genders might function and be trapped and constrained by both anatomy and patriarchy. This return to the more conventional systemic position by no means necessitates an exclusion of the gender issue and a subordination of it to the generation issue. Instead, it suggests a highly gendered look at the systemic position without the perpetration of the violence that the feminist critics of this position have unwittingly or otherwise fallen into.

In this chapter, the writer wishes to take a little further the tension in his writings between the systemic and psychodynamic points of view. On initial inspection, this might appear to be an act of epistemological lunacy in that traditionally these two modes have been seen as highly divergent (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980) to the point where Sluzki (1978) refers to the shift from analytic and other non-systemic ways of construing as a major epistemological revolution. Cottone (1989) follows this 'irreconcilability' approach when he locates the psychoanalytic model within the psychomedical model which is then presented as being diametrically opposed, in terms of underlying propositions, to the systemic model or to what others have referred to as the new epistemology (Dell, 1980; Keeney, 1983; Searight & Openlander, 1984). While many of the points of divergence between the psychomedical model (in which Cottone (1989) blithely locates the psychodynamic/object relations model) and the systemic model are agreed with by this writer, the following areas of apparent epistemological diversity are strongly challenged: that in the psychodynamic model, "change always occurs by someone doing something to someone else" (Cottone, 1989, p.228) whereas in the second order systemic model, "change always occurs through social relationships

(communication)" (Cottone, 1989, p.230); that in the psychodynamic model, treatment "failure results from misdiagnosis, mistreatment, or failure of responsible patients to follow therapeutic directives" (Cottone, 1989, p.229) – whereas in the systemic model "therapeutic failures are defined within a political context. Such failures represent the degree that client-systems are unable to link to relationships that 'fit' ... Neither a client nor a therapist can be held responsible for a failure; rather a failure is redefined as a 'bad fit' therapeutically" (Cottone, 1989, p.230); that in the psychodynamic model, "professional expertise can be gained only within the framework of training based on the scientific method" (Cottone, 1989, p.228) whereas in the new epistemology, "professional expertise is best gained within the framework of relational training ..." (Cottone, 1989, p.230); and that whereas in the psychomedical model "causes can be directly defined," (Cottone, 1989, p.228) in the new epistemology "cause is non-linear and reciprocal within the confines of the defined relationship of significance" (Cottone, 1989, p.230). The nature and extent of the challenge to these observed tensions will become manifest as this chapter unfolds.

This writer is of the firm view that these distinctions and the position that the psychodynamic cannot be reconciled with the systemic, is at least partially fallacious in that it is predicated upon an idea about psychodynamic psychotherapy that has more to do with undergraduate texts on Freudian ideas about development and the origins of psychopathology than it has to do with an appreciation of the practice of object relations psychodynamic

psychotherapy and the therapeutic system that is convened between therapist and patient. While many aspects of the two epistemologies might not be reconcilable, this writer is convinced that there exist huge areas of overlap between the practice of psychodynamic psychotherapy and the enactment of the new epistemology. In respect of the former, the writer will center his discourse around the object relations notion of projective identification and draw out some of its implications, and in respect of the latter, the writer is particularly interested in the notion of participant observation (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) being the linchpin of second-order systemic psychotherapy. While driving of psychodynamic circular pegs into second order cybernetic squares (or ought it to be the other way around) is sometimes acknowledged to be an unhelpful exercise, the present writer feels that a careful examination of areas of intersection between these two models might bear rich bifocal fruits in terms of placing therapists in a position to assist couples to circumnavigate gender based difficulties: "If the analyst on the receiving end is really open to what is going on [if the 'fit' is good enough (Cottone, 1989; Hoffman, 1981)] and able to be aware of what he is experiencing, this can be a powerful method for gaining understanding" (present author's parentheses []) (Joseph, 1987, p. 170).

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**CYBERNETICS OF CYBERNETICS:** “When the investigator starts to probe unknown areas of the universe, the back end of the probe is always driven into his own vital parts” (Lipset, 1980, p.214).

**PSYCHODYNAMICS:** “Even when the analyst feels himself to be little affected by his patient’s projection, a more detailed look may reveal expressions that he missed and pressures that he was not fully open to ; the analyst is always affected to some degree by his patient’s projection, there is always some ‘nudging’ by the patient to push the analyst into action, and inevitably there is usually some acting out by the analyst” (Spillius, 1992, in Anderson & Segal, 1992, p.64).

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The significant area of intersection between the two apparently divergent ways of punctuating can be carved out through a careful understanding of the psychoanalytic notion of projective identification (Bion, 1957, 1959, 1962, 1970; Joseph, 1985, 1987; Klein, 1946; Rosenfield, 1987; Sandler & Sandler, 1978; Segal, 1974) and the systemic notion of the therapist as participant observer (Becvar & Becvar, 1996 ; Dell, 1980; Hoffman, 1981; Keeney, 1982, 1983; Penn, 1985; Searight & Openlander, 1984).

## **Second-Order Systems Theory : The New Epistemology**

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the move toward second-order systems theory is that whereas in the model informed by a first-order perspective the therapist could maintain a degree of neutrality (Selvini et al, 1980) in respect of the system that she/he was treating from the outside (Searight & Openlander, 1984), in the second-order approach, the “Heisenberg-like hook between the observer and the observed” (Keeney, 1983, p.129) ensures that therapists are not simply in a position to observe their clients objectively but that the act of observation itself entails sequelae for both the observer and the observed (Bateson, 1972 ; Maturana, 1978 ; Varela, 1979) : “As an observer, I am part of the world I describe; that is I occupy two positions simultaneously – an inside and an outside position, a meta-position and a participatory position” (Penn, 1985, p.41).

From this description it is clear that the second-order manner of construing necessarily implies that the observer-therapist is also a participant in the system that is being ‘treated’ and with this ‘participanthood’ comes a modicum of humanity and humility. “We have to abandon the idea of the therapist as bullfighter, pushing and pulling the family to where he wanted it” (Hoffman, 1981, p.347). And as the notion of the bullfighter therapist is departed from, the therapist is no longer a ‘treater’ of an external system, but a participant in a new ecosystem defined by the initial system as well as the

therapist (Becvar & Becvar, 1996 ; Searight & Openlander, 1984) or by the structural coupling that takes place as the therapist and patient systems enter into a co-drift (Efran & Lukens, 1985).

The question posed by Penn (1985, p.41) is "how does one achieve (partial) observerhood?" [present writer's parentheses]. One of the more helpful and finesse-filled answers to this question, specifically when the Gender issue (with the perpetual propensity for the offence of sensibility) is considered, derives from the work of Maturana (in Efran & Lukens, 1985) who suggests that at least two conditions ought to be met. The first is that partial observerhood in respect of the self necessitates "an encounter with foreigners" (Penn, 1985, p.41) who invariably do not confirm, absolutely, the meanings of the 'self's' system and who therefore carry with them the propensity for evolution of that 'self' system as it SEES ITSELF differently; and the second is that observerhood comes about through the event of love in which "one becomes an observer of the specific conditions and the special circumstances of the loved one" (Penn, 1985, p.41). This circumstance of love has to do with the creation of room for the other in which she/he can exist (Efran & Lukens, 1985).

The writer suggests that this position is full of finesse as it would seem to make room for the required gentility and compassion that would need to be afforded to BOTH partners in a warring couple. It is argued here that this position is of value in the exploration of couples in difficulty as well as in an

understanding of normal, annoyed couples. This position has everything to do with Maturana's own notion of structural coupling (Efran & Lukens, 1985) as a means for exposing a couple to a medium without the perpetration of violence or imposition. However, the present writer is of the firm view that this presents only a partial picture and that it alone cannot take into consideration the specific sex differences in terms of biology (Goldner, 1988) between the protagonists in a couple's drama. Consequently, the present writer wishes to devote some space to the work of Maturana in respect of autopoiesis and structure determinism (Dell, 1985) which not only makes space for a meeting of the sexes in a manner which acknowledges the fear and excitement that such an encounter of difference might bring (Penn, 1985), but which is respectful of difference in that it views instructive attempts at interaction as coercive and violent (Efran & Lukens, 1985). For the present writer, the new epistemology is not only about the participant observer status of the therapist, but is also about the extent to which non-coercive exposure to 'other' through language is the only possible vehicle for choreographing the context for possible self-induced change.

Maturana is of the view that human systems are of circular nature and that consequently their organization is closed and by implication autonomous (Maturana & Varela, 1980). This notion is predicated on the belief that the function and behaviour of any given system is determined almost exclusively by its structure (Varela, 1979). However, the fact that the functioning of any given organism is structure determined does not imply stasis (Dell, 1985).

The structure does imply that any given organism has its own esoteric organization and consequent typical functioning and that this is referred to as autopoiesis, but that autopoietic organization or esoteric structure can shift, evolve, or develop under a certain set of conditions (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). These conditions are not informational as for Maturana, the furnishing of information to a closed system or a structure determined one simply results in the negation of that information in terms of the structure of that system which, per definition, cannot know that new information (Dell, 1985; Efran & Lukens, 1985; Maturana & Varela, 1980). Rather, Maturana suggests that it is the benign exposure of the organism containing the esoteric and determining structure to a medium in which it can drift (Efran & Lukens, 1985) that contains the possibility that structure might evolve out of an internal sense of knowing about these medium conditions across time: hence, structure might shift through exposure to non-instructional language (Penn, 1985).

How applicable this seems to be in the case of the male-female dichotomy and the literature surrounding it. The polarization described earlier between the various gender prerogatives (Flemons, 1989) suddenly becomes normal as does the annoyance between the sexes. Each has its own esoteric structure (attended to in acute detail in respect of the two sets of authors on the violence issue in chapter 2, and attended to in equally acute detail in respect of men and women in chapter 3) and will not, or rather cannot, yield to the position of the other. The more cogent the attempts at the instruction

of the other, the more information is supplied for elucidating the other, the less likely it will be that any evolution will take place. It is little wonder that after theoreticians have collided in all the major journals (which by definition are loci of information, not process work) for a period in excess of ten years, there is the beginning of a realization that overlapping narratives (media) (Doan et al, 1992) are perhaps the most useful way for evolving mutual understanding on the gender problem in family therapy. This necessitates a gentle exposure of each of the parties to the story of the other (the medium) which, across time, might permit the evolution of the internal structures of each of those parties.

The further value in the work of Maturana would be derived from the realization that both men and women, with their inherent individual structures, have been exposed to the medium of patriarchy for generations. Gradually, with the passage of time, women's structure underwent evolution to the point where that structure determined the need for liberation (Goldner, 1988). On the other hand, the male also underwent structural alterations the effects of which have not yet been fully explored or appreciated.

The final point that warrants attention in Maturana's (1974, 1978) theory is that this writer is of the view that anatomical structure, for both the male and the female, determines function to some degree. This structure is immutable and deeply embedded and while psychological structure might undergo gradual evolution in response to exposure to a medium across time, biology remains relatively static (although the evolution of the species necessarily needs to be considered). In view of this given, speculations might be entered

into concerning what is typical for both the male and the female. The literature seems to indicate that the male experience, in part as a function of exposure to the patriarchy medium and in part a direct function of biology, has to do with the presentation of practical strength and overt fortitude predicated on covert vulnerability (Ball et al, 1995; Breen, 1993; Goldner, 1988; Greenson, 1968; Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz, 1985; Payne, 1936) where intimacy is concerned, while the female experience seems to have evolved in a direction where the woman is most adept in emotional and intimacy matters (Ball et al, 1995; Kollock et al, 1985) and as such is generally more resilient than the male. This would seem also to be the view of later submissions that are concerned with making therapy a domain in which the man, not an overtly emotional fish by nature, can feel comfortable (Goldner et al, 1990; Gutsche et al, 1992).

In sum then, this writer finds Maturana's (1974) ideas instructive in the following areas: room can be made for the notion that change on the gender issue is a slow evolutionary process in which instructive yelling is useless – even though this is what occurs between partners and what has largely occurred in the literature to date; that both men and women have been exposed to the medium that is patriarchy and that this necessarily must have created even minor structural changes in each creature; that given the origins of Maturana's theory in biology, room is made for talking of 'typical' male and female experiences which to some extent are limited in possibility by the structure of each. It is suggested in relation to this latter point that it is the

non-recognition of the limitations of the other in terms of structure that accounts for much annoyance in couples' relationships.

### **Object Relations Theory and working with Projective Identification : A Partial Mirroring of the New Epistemology**

In this writer's view, the concept 'projective identification' (Bion, 1957, 1959, 1970; Klein, 1946; Segal, 1974) and the therapeutic method associated with it could be understood to be an embodiment of the core tenets of the new epistemology (Searight & Openlander, 1984). The former entails the communicative exchange in which the so-called 'observed system' puts "undigested parts of (its) experience and inner world (structure determinism) into the object (therapist) ... as a way of getting them understood and returned in a more manageable form" (Joseph, 1987, p.170); it has to do with the extent to which the method that surrounds attending to the projective identifications in the therapeutic context is benign and characterized by psychic tolerance (Money-Kyrle, 1955); and, finally, it has to do with the extent to which the communicational exchange involves both non-verbal (and therefore initially poorly defined) distinctions, as well as more sophisticated linguistic distinctions as its effects are offered to the patient in an effort to arrive at mutual understanding. The linguistic exchange alluded to might be analogous to the medium in which the patient drifts (Efran & Lukens, 1985). The interaction between analyst and patient in that medium might be understood to be analogous to co-drift (Efran & Lukens, 1985). The extent to which there can be an exchange of the undigested parts of experience might



be understood as the fit (Hoffman, 1981). And the extent to which psychic tolerance is a pre-requisite for understanding might be understood to be akin to non-instructive language (Penn, 1985), exposure to which occurs in contexts characterized by “the room created by love” (Penn, 1985, p.41) and a concomitant to gentle exposure of the self to an other through marked, but subtle and safe shifts in language. (Penn, 1985).

It was Bateson (cited in Lipset, 1980) who suggested that any exploration by an investigator into “unknown areas of the universe” usually involves “the back end of the probe (being) driven into his own vital parts” (p.214). With these words, Bateson alludes to the extent to which the investigator both influences, and perhaps most importantly to what is being attempted here, is influenced by the system that he/she observes (Penn, 1985). The psychoanalysts could not have used more articulate words to elaborate upon the concept of projective identification which is the most significant aspect of their clinical work. Spillius (1993) notes that “building on Bion’s ideas, Joseph stresses the way that patients attempt to induce feelings and thoughts in the analyst and, often very subtly and without being aware of it, try to ‘nudge’ the analyst into acting ... ” (p.63). Projective identification refers to the extent to which the therapist/analyst becomes a sounding board for feelings that are not differentiated in the patient, for feelings that cannot be borne by the patient, or simply – and again perhaps most relevant for this thesis – for feelings that the patient wishes would be understood by the analyst therapist but which cannot be articulated (Anderson & Segal, 1993; Joseph, 1987; Spillius, 1993) Now, the immediate retort would be to suggest that this is a linear formulation. The present writer contests this retort and points to the extent to which there exists mutual influencing between the therapist and patient in respect of both the

spoken and the unspoken which is embodied in the notion that the therapist/analyst is the container whilst the patient is the contained (Spillius, 1993). This container/contained formulation (Bion, 1957, 1970; Spillius, 1993) points to the extent to which there is a recognition on the part of analytic thinkers that far from the therapist doing something to the patient (Cottone, 1989) who then alters as an artefact of a linear intervention, there are rather two protagonists involved in a mutual influencing process – a process which had formerly been seen to be the domain of the new epistemology almost exclusively (Cottone, 1989; Searight & Openlander, 1984).

Perhaps most interesting is the extent to which the manner of working with projective identification in analytic therapy is attended to, which has to do with the extent to which the analyst can evolve some understanding of the feeling generated in him or her (unconsciously) by the patient and communicate this feeling (in conscious language) – mitigated by an attempt at understanding – back to the patient with the passage of time (Pick, 1985).

“We handle, move, and touch one another through language – both verbal language and non-verbal language” (Penn, 1985, p.38). It goes without saying that this ‘interpretation’ is not an immutable truth which is then beaten into the patient (which would then be a projective identification on the part of

the analyst who negates, in that moment, the possibility that he may be influenced by his or her patient), but that it is rather an idea in language which can then be explored through mutual experiencing: "the only point of importance in any session is the unknown and the 'known' about the patient ... is either false or irrelevant" (Spillius, 1988, p.17).

To the present writer, this sounds like the notions of Maturana (in Efran & Lukens, 1985) which suggest that instructive interaction is impossible, undesirable and tantamount to violence (Penn, 1985). In addition, the notion of the therapeutic system being characterized as a domain for the container and the contained (Bion, 1957, 1959, 1970) as well as being characterized as a domain tempered by the reparative urges of the therapist (benign wish to be helpful) (Money-Kyrle, 1955), seems to reverberate with Maturana's ideas on love as an event where one opens a space of existence for the other which constitutes a coupled system that "conserves love" (Penn, 1985, p.41).

As to what ought to transpire in the therapeutic relationship there would appear to be a massive overlap between the systemic (Penn, 1985) and the analytic (Bion, 1967). Penn (1985) writes that

this parent and child are in a process of co-inspiration and co-evolution: co-evolution because their mutually triggered structural change will generate new possibilities ... the path of their mutual evolutionary drift is not specified or set, so that at each moment many possibilities exist (p.40).

And Bion (1967) warns against the therapist being the bullfighter (Hoffman, 1981) or the instructive interactor and suggests that the moment of the session during which the new ecosystem (therapist and patient system, as opposed to just patient system) convenes is the only moment in which helpful insights/constructions might be gained : “the psychoanalyst should aim at achieving a state of mind so that at every session he feels he has not seen the patient before. If he feels he has, he is treating the wrong patient” (Spillius, 1988, pp.18-19). In his seminal paper, Bion (1967) emphasizes the extent to which the therapist needs to be aware of and ultimately subordinate his will to shift the patient or to cure the patient, in order that instructive interaction might be avoided. He suggests in this regard the therapist needs to go beyond desire (Bion, 1967). Similarly, in order to avert the possibility that the therapist might fail to recognize the autopoietic organization of the patient and his unique structure-determined internal correlations (Penn, 1985), the therapist is warned against the imposition of ideas about the patient derived from his/her history – the injunction against memory (Bion, 1967).

“In any session, evolution takes place. Out of the darkness and formlessness something evolves” (Spillius, 1988, p.18). Thus far, the writer has hoped to have established the extent to which, in both models of psychotherapy, there is a recognition of the extent to which the therapist needs to be open to experience; the extent to which the observer cannot separate him-or herself from the observed; the relative meaninglessness of

history prior to structural coupling, or the container joining with the contained; as well as the need to abandon the possibility of instructive interaction or the imposition of desire on the therapeutic context.

The writer suggests further that one way of punctuating the communicative exchange that is projective identification and its containment, is to understand it as the moment in which structural coupling takes place in that it constitutes, in this writer's view, the context or domain in which there can be organism-determined communication between two distinctly arranged organisms who engage one another via the medium of both verbal and non-verbal nudging and reflecting.

The value of this rather lengthy and intricate discussion is relative but is understood by this writer to be the following: it attempts a theoretical reconciliation of the analytic and systemic models in a manner which, in this writer's view, has heretofore not been conceived of in that these two models have either been viewed as so divergent that such a reconciliation is thought to have been foolhardy, or in that the historically attempted reconciliations transpire focusing on theoretical concepts that bear little relation to the **practice** of the respective therapeutic methods – the reconciliation of therapeutic methods in terms of practice is therefore thought to be unique; it places nearer to the centre of this document the possibility that the experience of the therapist in the here-and-now with the couple in the therapy room is likely to be a more intricate one than first-order understandings of couples therapy would have one believe. This is so because the therapist cannot lay

claims to neutrality on the gender issue and is likely to influence the couple he/she treats as an artefact of the language (both verbal and non-verbal or projected into) he/she embodies, and because the therapist is going to be nudged and tickled by “the back end of the probe that is always driven into his own vital parts” (Lipset, 1980, p.214). This involvement of the therapist in the therapeutic transactions from the vantage point of a protagonist-observer, rather than from the vantage point of a technician, is arrived at from two divergent paradigms; and finally, given that this writer has elected to draw upon each of these two paradigms in the previous chapters with a view to substantiating his ideas about the annoyance/ rage continuum in intimate male-female heterosexual relationships, it was felt that the reconciliation of the process aspects of the paradigms would round off the theoretical component of the polemic.

**The Work of Money Elkaim: not losing sight of the nudging that takes place between the partners. But what about the Therapist?**

Elkaim's most valuable contribution is the investigation of the intersection of the two organisms' maps of the world and how these generate annoyance and consternation (Elkaim, 1986).

Thus far, it has been established that each partner has a unique structure and further it has been mooted that this structure has, in part, to do with the medium in which it lives (specifically patriarchy) and, in part, to do with certain organismic fundamentals that have much to do with sex and gender.

Now, the focus for Elkaim (1986) is on the reciprocal double binds that develop between members of a couple. Elkaim, in evolving a model for intervention with couples asserts that “we use the term ‘official programme’ to describe the explicit request of each member of the couple for a change in the behaviour of the other member” (p.35) and the term “map of the world’ [to describe] the blueprint that each of the members of the couple has drawn up in the course of his or her past and then attempts to use in the present situation” (Elkaim, 1986, p.35). Attention is drawn to the crucial role that “the members of the family of origin” play in shaping the map of the world described and this generational context is described as “the most influential” (Elkaim, 1986, p.37).

The present writer is of the opinion that this model, with some modifications, might be truly helpful in the polarized situation which presents both in individual cases and in the theoretical literature surrounding them. The modification that must necessarily be made is that family of origin (Haley’s “generation” [1973, 1976a+b]) needs to be expanded to include the equally fundamental and influential context of gender (Goldner, 1988). In other words, in attempting to assist couples redefine their narratives, it is unavoidable that each partner’s relationship to patriarchy as well as to their own genders is considered (Goldner, 1988).

It is suggested that the overt and covert messages of each gender grouping might vary from case to case in respect of content pertaining to the generation or family of origin aspect. However, it is suggested that in many cases certain formations might be generalizeable for each gender grouping in terms of its relationship to patriarchy as well as to itself.

It is further suggested in line with the thesis pursued at the inception of this document that both partners or constellations of voices in a polarized couple or in a polarized body of literature might feel extremely constrained, trapped or imprisoned. It is for this reason that Elkaim's notion of "binds" (1986, p.25) in which members of a couple are torn by two co-presenting levels of expectation – the official programme and the world map – is so appealing to the present theoretician:

If they live alone [the members of the couple] they are both prisoners and jailers. If they meet somebody else who, for his or her own reasons, is ready to develop the form of behaviour corresponding to the member's map of the world, they are then only a prisoner and the other is the jailer. The couples conflict offers a means of placing an internal contradiction at a distance from oneself by experiencing one level of the double bind as being imposed from outside. (Elkaim, 1986, p.36)

These remarks are extremely helpful if the gender issue is to be addressed. It could be argued that the structure determined messages for each of the sexes might be along the following line:-

**FEMALE : Official Programme** – "I need 'input' and support."

**Map of world** – "It confines and subjugates me."



**MALE: Official Programme** – “I am super-human protector,  
 provider; omnipotent boss;  
 ultimate discarder of other.”

**Map of world** – “How do you expect me to do this: I am  
 vulnerable and can feel very helpless. I need  
 your support.  
 Contain me.”

While these remarks are only tentative and exploratory, they do highlight the respective trappedness and experienced imprisonment of each of the sexes as well as the relative contribution of the patriarchy medium to the trappedness of each sex. These remarks might also be highly instructive in assessing the relative contributions of the sides in the literature : the feminists calling for comment but fearing that it might subjugate once again in the form of rationalizing harm and damage; the other authors struggling to deal with the limitations of conventional theories in terms of being able to ‘provide’ answers to all therapeutic situations including abusive ones, and electing silence over the admission of vulnerability.

In sum then, the model advanced here invokes the issue of gender as a central one alongside or perhaps even in front of generation when dealing with warring couples. It suggests further that certain archetypical messages (functions of mutual exposure to medium as well as functions of shared physical biological structure with same sex members), indicative of the binding of both partners by patriarchy, will persistently emerge in such therapy and

need to be addressed in a fully gendered conversation. These messages can almost be predicted on the basis of structure determinism but probably vary to some degree as a function of generation.

### **A Second Order Elkaim: The position of the Therapist**

The writer points out that the inherent flaw in the model alluded to above is that there is no mention made of the extent to which the couple might attempt to nudge the therapist in certain directions; the extent to which the therapist might maintain the problem through any number of nudgings in relation to either of the partners; or the extent to which the therapist might be nudged by either of the partners; all the mutual influencing plethora of possibilities with regard to all of these factors.

From the discussion in chapter 3, it is thought likely that the therapist will have his or her hands full as will the respective partners in terms of containing and needing to be contained, imprisoning, and feeling imprisoned.

This plethora of possibilities and the experiences that therapists have in this regard might form an integral part of the investigative component of this thesis.

### **Maturana and the object-relations thinkers : being inducted into the Adult World through exposure to language**

In her concluding discussion in Foundations of family therapy, Hoffman (1981) suggests that part of a move to second-order thinking and the new epistemology will probably involve a profound alteration in the manner that therapists think about symptoms. She suggests that one might think of symptoms as "harbingers of change" (Hoffman, 1981, p.347).

The present writer finds this to be an exceedingly helpful idea in respect of couples whose difficulty pertains to the annoyance/rage continuum that would seem to be inextricably bound up with the Gender issue (Goldner, 1988). This writer has already suggested that the 'law of the phallus' has nothing to do with the anatomical organ per se, but rather to do with structural linguistics (Lacan, 1966). Lacan suggests that the inherent value in the entire oedipal drama for the little girl has less to do with real penis envy and significantly more to do with the induction of the little girl into the adult world or an entry into culture via the language medium (Breen, 1993). This writer is also acutely aware of his own experience and that of colleagues in private practice to the effect that couples frequently nudge the therapist to act as arbiter in their disputes, as some sort of ultimate referee who is afforded endless latitude to make an 'objective' finding in respect of the squabble of the moment, provided that the finding is favourable for each of the partners.

It occurs to the present writer that given the psychoanalytic theory espoused in chapter 3, couples who seek the assistance of a third party with a

symptom of one or another sort, might well be commenting on their relative lack of induction into culture in respect of being able to function as adults in relation to one another. It is around this induction into adulthood that the three protagonists (husband, wife and therapist) must engage.

Clearly, to play the nudged-for arbiter would be to commit therapeutic suicide, but the work of Maturana (1978) permits the possibility of a structural coupling at the moment where the harbinger of adulthood, the symptom, beckons.

What is called for is a series of conversations in which an attempt at understanding might provide the necessary room for the encounter between the three “foreigners which is both risky and exciting” (Penn, 1985, p.41).

**Externalization: an attempt at expelling the inhabiting demon**

On reflection it would seem that externalization or the creation of a bogey-man against whom the couple can tilt (White, 1986; Epston, 1986, 1989) has been one of the themes that has pervaded the discussion conducted thus far in the polemic. The notion that “to see men as the enemy is to confuse the person with the problem” (Adams, 1990, p.40) seems to point the way – in conjunction with the notion that both men and women have been bound up by, and have suffered at the hands of patriarchy – toward the use of externalization in couples’ therapy.

The present writer feels that creative and partially emancipating dialogues around gender might be opened up in therapies with warring

couples if the war can be externalized and the partners afforded the opportunity to script narratives about how they interpret the impact of the externalized medium and its contribution to the current annoyance. This might be truly creative and liberating as it is placing patriarchy at the hands of the couple and not the couple at the hands of patriarchy. Stories might begin to emerge concerning the relationships between fathers and sons in terms of what they have and what they might lack; stories might begin to emerge concerning relations between mothers and daughters in terms of what they offer and might lack ; and stories might begin to emerge which speak of profound envy between the sexes in terms of each other's relative positions. If the couples domain is adhered to in intervention then humankind stands to be emancipated. If either partner is treated individually for any length of time then the therapy has given in to the "right and left errors" alluded to by Goldner (1988, p.28).

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY OR MYTHOLOGY

#### Introduction

The writer moves to increasingly more irreverent formulations and positions in this segment of the thesis. This is achieved by a 'gendering' of the question of research methodology, or rather the introduction of new way of languaging about research, influenced by Goldner's (1988) irreducible category. The writer suggests that while this approach is rather unconventional, it is certainly innovative and worthy of consideration in relation to research which has the cybernetics of cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) as its epistemological linchpin.

#### Newtonian Science and the erection

The world of scientific enquiry contains a tension between more conventional, positivistic forms of investigation and less experimental, more qualitative forms of inquiry (Auerswald, 1987; Kerlinger, 1986). At present, the family therapy field appears divided between those who lean toward a more conventional Newtonian epistemology (positivism), those who reject it, and those who are somewhere in between (Cottone, 1989). All positions are legitimate and there are thoughtful individuals propagating each (Atkinson, Heath, & Chenail, 1991): "Conventional researchers will likely find qualitative methods too subjective and uncontrolled to yield valid findings" (p.164) while

others will find traditional methods too restrictive and controlled to yield a bright flash of insight never intended in the initial design.

The writer, for purposes of this project, gravitates toward the latter position and does so in the interests of having a little gendered fun which has serious theoretical implications. Kerlinger (1986, p.292) argues for all that he is worth that “without strong structure, no matter how rich and significant the content, the creations may be weak and sterile”. This writer finds the use of language fascinating, particularly when ‘gender’ enters the interpretative framework. At a push, the quotation might be radically and playfully rephrased as: ‘full, pulsating and impositional erection is everything. Without it, one has nothing: Lingering clitoral explorations are taboo and to be prohibited as they are weak and defy the procreational purpose of God and Nature.’

This author suggests that if one begins to view this standard critique (Kerlinger, 1986) of qualitative approaches from a gender sensitive perspective some interesting and, in this writer’s estimation, some innovative thoughts begin to emerge. Specifically, that Newtonian approaches to science might begin to be viewed as having something in common with what has been referred to elsewhere in this text as a ‘masculine’ position and that qualitative approaches to research might have more in common with a ‘feminine’ position. The former approach to science with its emphasis on research design, critique of methodology, null hypotheses, alternative hypotheses (Kerlinger, 1986) - is stiff, prescriptive, definitive, assertive, and controlling. The latter, more

qualitative approach to science - with its emphasis on phenomenology, the embracing of uncertainty (Hoffman, 1981), the tolerance of ambivalences (Hoffman, 1981), the embracing of a both/and perspective (Hoffman, 1981) - seems altogether more tolerant, more able to bear uncertainty, more inclined to lingering explorations, and characterized by a lesser propensity for research coitus with a defined agenda.

In Newtonian science and in its standard bearer in psychological research and the practice of therapy, the psychomedical model, the presumption is that the universe can ultimately be known (Cottone, 1989). The assumption is further that what is not currently known will become clear with the passage of time as **tools** are refined and research **instruments** are made more precise (Cottone, 1989). The researcher or clinician is the expert who stands outside the system that he/she treats or observes. One way of punctuating this state of affairs is that the Newtonian scientist is like the male lover who wants his performance to be rated so that it might be fine tuned, honed and perfected to furnish the woman, for whom he is performing, with perfection in orgasm – perhaps even the ‘best’ she has ever had. The Newtonian lover might be interested in questions which are exclusionary, clinical, and ultimately dispassionate. He may wish to know, for instance, what works and what does not, rather than acknowledging that certain things work in some contexts better than in others.

The qualitative researcher, on the other hand, seems to be able to tolerate lingering explorations of the subject matter, bearing responsibility



(Cottone, 1989) for therapeutic and research 'mishaps,' never embracing an exclusionary policy, always including himself/herself in the description of events (Cottone, 1989; Hoffman 1990), and accepting so-called research failures as feedback (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) rather than as discouragement or personal injury.

In sum then, this writer has playfully stated a preference for the infinite possibilities perceived in both 'clitoral', 'vaginal', 'feminine' research than in the raging erection that is perceived to be inherent in this writer's irreverent characterization of Newtonian science. Conventional conceptions of erection seem, to this writer, to have everything to do with proof and ultimate definition. This writer states a predilection for a different discourse which might recognise the folly in this sort of certainty and which might seek less for dominion (patriarchal) in the research arena and more for conversation and the gentle co-presentation of overlapping dialogues.

This writer has investigated at length, in the opening chapters, the extent to which there is folly in defining single ways of achieving legitimacy. This is a valuable critique of patriarchy (Goldner, 1988) which needs to be brought to bear on the question of research also, where there are different, but equally valid ways of legitimizing knowledge (Atkinson et al, 1991). The question that the writer is left with at the end of this segment is whether he has perpetrated conversational violence in relation to Newtonian colleagues which would leave him in the same trap in which he locates feminist critiques of men and patriarchy which are thought to be exclusional and violent? While the

answer to this question seems to be in the affirmative, an acknowledgement of this will have to suffice temporarily. The writer promises greater sensitivity to this issue in the next segment.

### **Exploring less erect but equally potent alternatives**

“From a constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, co-operative enterprise of persons in relationship” (Gergen, 1985, p.267). This would seem to suggest that this evolution and acquisition of knowledge occurs in relationship rather than in professional isolation and drinking in of facts in formal educational institutions (Cottone, 1989). The question that then beckons is what sort of relationship is conducive to exchange or generation of information?

Strangely enough, the answer to this question has been known for decades by psychoanalysts who had a sense of the therapeutic importance of being able to tolerate separateness without feeling overwhelmed, attacked or attacking, and by Bateson (1972, 1979) who understood the informational value of difference and who married an appreciation of difference with knowledge in the context of respect and care (Bateson & Brown, 1975). This already invented wheel notwithstanding, the writer must answer the question with more scholastic rigour.

The writer – in his discussions on the issues at stake in the gender debate and in his process observations regarding the debate itself – has

devoted much space to a delineation of the extent to which instructive interaction (Maturana, 1986) is thought to be impossible and therefore violent and disrespectful when attempted (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). This is predicated upon the notion that living systems – research or therapeutic ones – are structure determined and autopoietic in nature (Dell, 1985; Efran & Lukens, 1985; Maturana, 1978; Maturana & Varela, 1973) in that “their operation is a function of how they are built, arrayed and put together” (Efran & Lukens, 1985, p.24). The point to the discussion has been that imposition of a patriarchal discourse has been violent and unhelpful not only to women but also to men (Adams, 1990; Gutsche et al, 1992) and that imposition of a feminist antithetical discourse – while necessary in an evolutionary process – has been equally unhelpful in that it may have silenced men. What might be required seems to have less to do with theses and antitheses and more to do with syntheses. Even this seems a little too simple and prescriptive, actually, and perhaps even impossible to attain especially given the impossibility of lapsing into further instructive interactions and prescriptions. What might then be required is a gentle respect for the non-absolute nature of ideas (theses, antitheses and syntheses) across **time** (Auerswald, 1985; Hoffman, 1981).

From a methodological point of view then, it has become important to this writer to mirror, in the research system, what has been offered in the discussions on the gender conundrum and in the process remarks regarding the gender debate.

To achieve this, the writer **unashamedly** concedes that he is quite likely to locate in his so-called 'research' much of the so-called 'evidence' he requires to substantiate his so-called 'hypotheses'. This concession is freeing, rather than enslaving for the writer and ought not to come as a horrid surprise when one considers the cybernetics of cybernetics epistemology which suggests that knowledge and information are self referential (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) and "non-objectivist" (Hoffman, 1990, p.11); when one considers that "you (inevitably) wind up with functions that are functions of themselves, interactions that intersect with themselves, properties that compute themselves and so on ..." (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p201) ; when one considers that within this epistemology "all descriptions are seen primarily as information about the observer" (Keeney & Ross, 1992, p.3); and when one considers that it is in the nature of organisms to create their own realities (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) which constitute "domains specified by the operations observer" (Maturana, 1978, p.55).

As this writer engages with the theoretical and personal material in this text, the significance of candor and humility in research, therapy and theorizing take on enormous significance at the personal level. The present writer unashamedly dismantles ideas about precise ways of going about research – there will be no well recognized and rigorously written up methodology for this text as he feels that methodology, like power, is something of a myth within the constructionist way of seeing. The writer will

simply present four narratives of verses within multi-verses (Efran & Lukens, 1985) which he adjudges to pertain to A Predominantly Male Analysis of the Annoyance – Rage Continuum in Intimate Heterosexual Relationships as he sees it. He will discard the third person syntactical disposition so prevalent in conventional ‘research’ and will engage with the narratives in the first person as this sort of engagement is inevitable anyway (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Atkinson et al, 1991; Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Cottone, 1989; Efran & Lukens, 1985; Elkaim, 1980, 1981; Gergen, 1985; Hoffman, 1990; Keeney & Morris, 1985; Maturana, 1986; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Richards & Von Glaserveld, 1979; Varela & Johnson, 1976). And this writer will humbly offer his singular (Elkaim, 1980, 1981), esoteric, structure determined (Dell, 1985; Efran & Lukens, 1985; Maturana, 1978) set of ideas about the topic. How the reader is nudged (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) by these narratives and the present writer’s interpretation of them is not something that this writer can, or wants to control. The narratives and their inferred meanings are important to the “me” in this thesis.

I have emerged to meet those people who offered me the stories that they felt had a bearing on the male side of the annoyance rage continuum in intimate heterosexual relationships. I thank them for their candor and trust that they know that what I make of their stories is necessarily mine and only possibly theirs.

If there is an 'aim', it is to begin to evolve a body of views that have to do with the male position and experience in relation to the gender conundrum. I welcome contributors, participants, detractors, and ignorers. I do what is meaningful to me and I am humbly convinced that there is nothing "weak and sterile" (Kerlinger, 1986, p.292) in what I have to offer.

Finally, my express intention is to avert falling into the trap of committing violence as defined by Maturana (1986) and as expressed by Doan et al, (1992, p.29) : "the holding of a belief to be true by a person or group such that another person's or group's view is untrue and must change". While I feel I have a useful understanding of this dictum, and am able to uphold it from time to time, I know that I am doomed to fail with regard to the expressed intention. This tension between averting and committing violence will be taken up in the latter parts of this work. It is thought to be crucial.

## CHAPTER 6

***'To sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub : for in that sleep of death what dreams may come ....' (Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 1, 1.65)***

**An Introduction to A's Narrative**

My patient, A, was in his early twenties at the time of having these dreams, a psychology honours student, and on the verge of getting married. He had sought therapy in order to evolve more complex meanings about himself. Nothing about him suggested severe DSM-V pathology or that he had any proclivity for beating women or for raging against them. In fact, he appeared to be an extremely gentle sort who preferred the feminist position to any of the patriarchal dogma that one might have expected from a misogynist.

In the week prior to the session in which the two dreams were reported, he had been house-sitting. He had asked a male friend to join him in this endeavour so that the pair might "have a jol" and the friend had eagerly agreed. On the second last morning of the house-sitting stint, the friend had indicated that he had had enough, wanted out, and would not be staying the last night. My patient had spent the evening with his fiancé and was feeling positively terrified about returning to the house alone to complete the chore. I got a strong sense of an almost childish terror at the prospect of having to 'face the bogey-men in the dark, all alone'. His fiancé had sensed this terror

or concern and had suggested that he might sleep over at her place. What follows are two dream narratives either as they were 'actually' dreamed, 'actually' reported, or as they were 'actually' co-dreamed-up in the therapy room.

### **Some thoughts from the sleeping unconscious**

1. "I was walking in hospital. All the faces were smashed. There was a woman lying on her back with her whole face smashed in. It was a very gory sight. I was scared and very uncomfortable. Suddenly I became aware that my fiancé was with me. As we walked we came upon a black man drowning in a cylinder of water. It reminded me of the sort of formalin-filled containers that they had at medical school in which they kept specimens. We got the man out and saved him but she (the fiancé) did more work than me. This bothered me".

A then went into a diatribe about hated right wing debaters who terrorize, and then he continued with the second dream:

- 2 "We were with a whole bunch of couples. One partner had to hide and the other had to go on a treasure hunt for that partner. There was a strong sense of competition in me in relation to the other seekers. My fiancé had left all sorts of clues for me about where to find her. They were romantic and loving clues. I had



such a strong sense that as a couple we were winning because of the clues she had left. She was the better one. She was the driving force”.

\*\*\*\*\*

What I am able to relate to in A's story, or the meaning that he and I were able to work with in the therapy was immediately alive in the therapeutic relationship: the patient sits with some difficult, scared, and threatened feelings pertaining to his own relationship and to an exposure of himself in the therapy room regarding his furious feelings in his private dream world ; this is not unlike the extent to which he felt exposed and uncovered as his threatened and unenthusiastic feelings regarding returning to the house were almost palpable to the fiancé; and, just like the fiancé, I move to try and understand the vulnerability and to handle it with warmth and gentility – probably of the order of the fiancé's understanding of A's fear and also of the order of her offer that he could stay the night at her place; and ultimately, my experience of the patient in response to my understanding and gentility was of at least a modicum of annoyance on the part of A for me, perhaps a degree of resentment that I was able to understand, and at worst a torrent of silent rage as A feels himself being doubly 'belittled'. Not only is the world too frightening to want to live up the male expectations that he ought to sally forth and fend in the empty house, but any comfort in this regard is the second insult – given the constructed expectation.

I interpret the dream further as follows: my patient is a male (in my thesis, by definition, more puny than the woman who is more able to feel, help nurture, accept help, and be holding and constructive) full of doubt, insecurity, and boyish fear of monsters. His fiancé senses the fear and generously makes a bed for him which represents the woman doing the looking after. My patient then falls asleep to dream of how this being helped by the woman is untenable to his male psyche. It unleashes the right wing part of himself to attack and psychically bludgeon onto her back and into smithereens this helpful woman. The woman's understanding – which is certainly needed desperately – simultaneously cannot be tolerated too much – or at all – as it threatens my patient's maleness and need for autonomy.

The same theme inheres in the second dream where the woman is again the more constructive and therefore the resented part of the dyad. Competition with this woman is displaced into competition with other couples for fear of the woman's response to such competition and my patient is both grateful and resentful about the fact that it is the proactive woman who must lead the dyad with romantic clues.

One of the hypotheses I have been keen on advancing throughout this text is that the relationship between men and women is characterized by an intense envy on the part of the man for the qualities embodied by the woman and that with the rise of feminism, this envy has been intensified as women have been able to access both vaginal pleasure and clitoral, both homely

pleasures and responsibilities and the pleasures and burdens associated with career. Not only this, but as the oppression of women persisted prior to and during the evolution of the feminist antithesis, women were able to find comfort, support, and understanding with one another in both formal and informal sororities. I feel quite passionately that this envy underlies the annoyance and rage that arises in ordinary men from time to time as they traverse life with their heterosexual partners. The envy is excited by the possibility that men, as a rule, are unable to form **nurturant fraternities**; that men still to have access to only one source of pleasure and responsibility in the form of the penis or career, and that while men are encouraged to enter the more emotional and domestic domains, they perhaps feel less equipped than their female counterparts for this pleasure and responsibility; and that while feminism has helped women to evolve rich meanings about the possibilities in both themselves and their lives, men might still feel 'un-evolved' beyond the insecurities that gave rise to bludgeoning patriarchy in the first place. These three factors cannot be seen as separate but ought rather to be seen as highly interactive and mutually contributory.

As soon as this envy is excited, there is only one thing for it – to place the excitor on her back, in hospital with grievous injuries, or both. Yet a complete decimation of the woman is untenable also as it leaves the male feeling too insecure, out on a limb, and alone without any reinforcing agent, and so, she is psychically resuscitated in the dream and appears alongside A

as the fiancé. Together, they must rescue the blackened relationship, the relationship tarnished by the moments of ratty-ness, outburst, or bludgeoning. He would dearly love to survive without her or settle for salvaging the relationship himself, but he cannot. She must be involved in this process. A manages to save his blackened relationship, but the involvement of the fiancé sets up the next moment of blemish as it is the primer for further and future envy of ability.

What is exceedingly interesting about this dream is that it is just that, a dream. Even so-called gentle men, when the frontal lobes and Superegos are put to rest for the night, might entertain, if only at the level of unconscious phantasy, bother, cross-ness, or even enormous rage for their partners. For this reason I am inclined to suggest that we should desist from reifying the misogynist or the abusive man who is forever and chronically behaving badly and bring the annoyance rage continuum more centre stage.

I am of the view that annoyance, cross-ness, grumpiness, anger, and rage are all part of the male position and that they play a defining role in it. Does this excuse abuse or bludgeonings? Certainly not, and neither A nor I could ever condone that sort of behaviour. Could this also be taken to mean that women are not entitled to, or capable of these emotions? Neither A nor I would be silly enough to suggest this either. Rather, though, I would suggest that in defining the male experience some recognition of this ratty-ness, anger, cross-ness, and rage as a more or less autopoietic feature would be

more helpful than exclusive prescriptions against 'bad behaviour'. I also suggest that a degree of envy is also at the heart of the male experience and that this too ought to be given a hearing rather than exclusive attention being paid to the vile ways in which patriarchy chose to expel envy through a denigration of the envied object.

Noted for his absence in the critical end of the house-sitting story is the male friend or symbolic father who is unable to stay for the last night and who may not have appreciated or been helped to appreciate A's fears. Being free from a mother who, as an adult is essentially different from her male son, and who is experienced as engulfing if such a difference cannot be securely supported, and being liberated from the effects of envy is, I feel strongly, contingent upon the male feeling secure enough in his maleness, sure enough of what maleness actually entails, and safe enough in respect of reaching out to other men without fear of ridicule, rejection, belittlement, or fear of receiving nothing of value.

I accept the wrongfulness in the historical subjugation of women, but A and I are also victims of that subjugation in the sense that as symbolic oppressors we were never required to examine vulnerability or essences and subsequently, as the blamed, it is hard for us to catch up to the demands of emancipated women. In the post patriarchal era it feels that we are required to be a little more mature than our roots permit us to be in that it is the very vulnerability that defines us that was part of the oppression inherent in a patriarchal system. Under patriarchy we were not afforded an opportunity to

evolve as oppression was luxurious. Post patriarchy it is difficult to feel free enough to express vulnerability or discover deprived, moody and unstable essence in the face of the rapidity with which 'behaving badly' labels are applied and in the face of the feminist demand for a maturity that has barely begun to evolve.

Perhaps, above all else, I want to unashamedly locate men toward the beginning of their evolutionary continuum and to begin to evolve an understanding of what more primitive maleness is all about. From there, it is possible to build. From a position of critical instructive interaction, the organism will simply resist evolution. The change needs to come from within maleness where men begin to define their own experience and become a little thick-skinned to external demands which have more to do with behaving as another group thinks we ought to than to do with attending to our own stuff in a responsible way.

## CHAPTER 7

### **BEING HELPED TO BUY A CAR WITHOUT THE WHEELS COMING OFF – OR DO THEY?**

#### **Introduction**

R is a well-liked member of the teaching staff at a private tertiary education institution. He really seems like a rather ordinary fellow, good at his work, pleasant to the people around him, and generally well liked. This vignette illustrates his view of a negotiation between himself and his wife.

The offering of the text is made to me with much humility, apology, deference, and even a little shame at its contents. I thank R for his courage and contribution.

#### **The male bind exemplified : R's Narrative exactly as it was presented**

"Delegation of major tasks takes place, for example, the upgrading of a son's car to a more recent and better model".

"SCENARIO: \* Husband does all the investigating

\* Husband, after a great deal of research and knowledge of the second-hand car market makes the choice.

\* The offer to purchase is prompted by the fact that the old car would need major repairs urgently.

- "CRITICISM THEN FOLLOWS:
- It's not the right choice of car.
  - Was it listed by the AA ?
  - Did you show it to your mechanic ?
  - Did you show it to your friend who knows more about cars than you do ?
  - It will give you more trouble than the old one.
  - You have bought rubbish.
  - Now you'll see what will happen.
  - You have wasted your money.
  - Only fools would rush in to buy like you did.
  - Did you test drive the car ?
  - I told you to buy a new car.

- "RESPONSES:
- \* I got a good deal.
  - \* I got R 6500-00 back in for the old car.
  - \* I got rid of the old car easily.
  - \* Lindsay Saker have given me a 2-year guarantee.
  - \* I am only paying R 13000-00.
  - \* This includes the R1300-00 for the guarantee.
  - \* I did test drive it.



- \* I will show the car to my mechanic.
- \* It is a 1988/89 model with 95 000 km on the clock.
- \* I have investigated and researched for a long time and I know that this is a good deal.

- “TRY TO REASON: \*
- They will fix it for 2 years. There is a 2-year Lindsay Saker Master Car Warranty.
  - \* We were able to get rid of the old car painlessly.
  - \* We really got a very good deal.

- “RESPONSES: –
- You can’t judge the car by its looks.
  - It will spend more time in the garage than on the road.

“SUMMARY: = You achieve nothing by trying to reason. The only answer is to listen, take their criticism, agree with it, and carry on because as long as we have the car for, I will be to blame for every single problem.

“GENERAL: # Tasks are given to you to complete but criticism takes place at every turn. They never offer to take over and handle the task themselves though”.

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Perhaps the most flippant way of punctuating this particular narrative would be to suggest that if this is the manner in which couples negotiate discord, it is little wonder that an enormous boom has been experienced in the South African used car market of late.

As already indicated there are numerous interpretations and sets of meaning that might be seen to inhere in R's contribution. For me though, one of the most striking and one of the most poignant is the extent to which R cannot define himself as distinct or separate from his wife with the result that she assumes a central position in his narrative in spite of the absence of her actual voice.

For me, this defines one of the fundamentals of the male experience: that on the outside there are pretensions of behaving unilaterally and separately from our partners in that we might all go out, price and sign offers-to-purchase used cars, but that this apparently autonomous behaviour needs to be complexified. The idea about which I am rather passionate is that it would seem that while autonomy from 'woman' is certainly a goal and part of the male prerogative, it seems to be so absolutely elusive.

Definition of the male self only seems attainable in those rare cases where there are sound, gentle, and constructive relations with father who is sufficiently present, available, robust, and sensitive to furnish the emerging man with an object of identification other than mother. In cases where this identification does not appear to be sufficiently strong, which I feel is fairly typical, the male is left in the sort of trapped and contorted state that R finds

himself in. It seems to me that R, like so many men, would wish to back himself regarding his own judgement, sexual prowess, and ability to perform either in bed or in the used car market. There are strides in this direction, but ultimately there is deference to the person with whom the link cannot be broken and from whom a modicum of separateness was never adequately realized – the woman. And herein lies the origin of the annoyance rage continuum in the male aspect of heterosexual relations – in the absence of good enough fathering there is a profound trappedness between wanting desperately to define the self as separate from the woman and needing her reassurance that this definition is permissible, and competently achieved – a reassurance which, by definition, interferes with the autonomy and individuation which is being strived for.

I can strongly identify with R's feeling of being a whipping boy, of feeling like a marionette, of feeling like a yo-yo on the end of a string which moves to define itself but which is jerked back to the hand that held it initially, with force. What I am certainly **not arguing** is that women do anything to men, that women are necessarily malevolent controllers and the like. What I am arguing is that the heritage of men in terms of what patriarchy has afforded them or what their individual fathers have afforded them is particularly puny and unhelpful in terms of allowing or helping them to establish a male identity that is meaningful, robust, and enduring. The net result of this circumstance is the extent to which the annoyed or raging partner carries the belief, the phantasy, or the perception that he is being controlled by a woman in relation

to whom he dearly wishes to be separate from at the psychic, emotional, and reassurance levels but upon whom he is 'forced' to rely for guidance in this attempt to individuate. The **pathos** of this situation is all too often missed.

It is my hunch that when the phantasy of being controlled becomes too unbearable, it is about at this point that there might be a verbal attack on the partner or a physical bludgeoning – seldom, if ever to the point of complete decimation mind you, as this would leave the raging man with nothing to fix or, more specifically, with no symbolic parents whatsoever and with no source of reassurance – with the ultimate pyrrhic victory, and with profound sensations of performing a victory salute while standing on a house of cards with jackboots.

Should the partner collude with the primitive need of the man for her resuscitation, then she helps to set in motion his next attempt to individuate from her with primitive rage and she intensifies his feelings of trappedness in that she has been the magnanimous granter of amnesty as she has underscored her capacity to survive whereas the male persistently feels more feeble and less of a robust survivor.

R's narrative speaks of the jackboot on the house of cards more loudly than anything else. It appears to be such a well defined, logical and well-formatted dialogue about the insanity of women and their incapacity to reason. It speaks to me though, more of fragmentation and bits than of sound structure under important headings presented in the form of concise points. And again, herein lies the **pathos** of the male condition.

I feel that this pathos is not properly understood by those who align themselves with the feminist position. If it is understood, then this understanding does not seem to extend sufficiently far. I appreciate and have a good grasp of the female rage at a history of oppression at the foot of the jackboot alluded to in this dialogue and a poignant sense of the heightened acuity of this rage when one understands that the oppression was either gratuitous or predicated on the weakness, fear or envy on the part of the 'men in boots'. Yet, if the pathos of the male condition were fully understood, then while male annoyance and rage need never to be condoned or tolerated, there might be an avoidance of modes of behaviour which are instructive and therefore inflammatory and there might be a genuine attempt to leave men to define their own experience.

And herein lies another rub : being allowed to define my experience or needing to ask for this space may, in and of themselves lead to annoyance, resentment, and rage.

What I hope to be illustrating though, is the folly of instructive interaction and the extent to which the male aspect of the heterosexual relationship can, at times, be a veritable sea of landmines in which a rubber dinghy is trying to float, for the male protagonist.

## CHAPTER 8

### **WHEN IN DOUBT BUILD HER A CARPORT (NOT PUBLISHED IN ANY OF THE DEFINITIVE GENDER HANDBOOKS)**

#### **Introduction**

C is also a gentle teacher at a tertiary education institution. He lectures accounting at the highest possible level. He is young, energetic, well liked by staff and students and, as is the case with my entire community of men, does not appear to smack of any overt signs of misogyny. What follows is the narrative exactly as it was presented to me.

#### **Carports and reparation**

“Subject : Male, 28 heterosexual.

Marital Status : None, but presently co-inhabits house with partner (hopefully this will be it).

Relationship Status : Best one to date.

”Basic Scenario

“I was driving with G, my girlfriend, to fetch some hardware supplies I required to build her a carport. A task that I was quite happy to perform. I enjoy handi-work.

“On the way I mentioned that we had been invited to lunch with my parents. I was told that she was far too busy with her studies to be able to dine with my parents. A heated argument ensued. We turned around, without the carport components, and went home. She proceeded to pack.

“Infuriated, I left. While driving around I stopped at a hardware store and bought the carport parts.

“During my drive my thoughts ranged from ‘fuck her’, to ‘let her go’, to ‘don’t be stupid’.

“G is all I have ever looked for in a woman in so many respects. She is loving, kind, generous, intelligent, beautiful, and most importantly shares my views on family and morality. She is moody, and speaks openly and at length about the things that upset her (seldom actions of mine). I listen. I am, for the most part, cheerful and very little affects my overall mood. Care-free may be a better description. So why should I listen to all the complaining? To reduce the complaining, I do things to make her happy. (Build a carport, paint the lounge, go away for a weekend, cook supper, buy flowers .....). When I ask then what more I need to do to make her happy, I am accused of throwing all that back in her face, and ‘anyway, I didn’t ask you to do all those things.

“Don’t do anything you are not asked to do. The result of our little run in was without major consequence. We still share one home. I went home and told her that I wanted her to stay. I explained that she needed to chill out a bit with her job and her studies. With time to relax she would be a lot happier and we could do things together instead of me doing things for her. Those

things I did, I came to resent because I felt taken for granted. I felt taken for granted because I never saw a positive result (a smile on her face).

"I treat the complaints in a light hearted fashion. I also have decided on a more selfish attitude for me, for example, a night out with the boys, hamburgers for supper, and a weekend of sport.

"Marc, I have written down a number of my actions here. These actions were as a result of what I felt at the time."

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C's story is, for me, the story of the new-age man, the 'vagina-man' if only he could locate one. I intend no disrespect or judgement in this assertion either, as I can identify many aspects of this overtly benign trainee and of this apparently problem free creature of sensible capitulation in myself. C reports rather unashamedly, as the 'vagina' man ought to, that he is a sensitive partner, a good listener to the point of over extending himself in this department, the couple's cook (leaving his partner with shoes, without fetters, and on birth control in the study of the couples home rather than the kitchen), the purchase of love-flowers, and the choreographer of much desired weekends away. In addition, C is also Mr Fixit and the creator of carports which define his love and care for his partner.



Yet is the 'vagina-man' not just more of the same old problem. Let us take a closer look.

I think that one of the fundamental difficulties with this position is that it creates circumstances of imagined, perceived, and phantasized owing. In response to a culture of popular magazines and in response to freely available texts on 'Gender' men like C and I quietly go about a studied and well-intentioned exploration of what we believe to be the territory of feminism as we seek to liberate ourselves and our partners from the errors and failings of the previous generation.

I feel strongly that there is folly in this because, as we already indicated, if the hardware is not finely tuned to run the software of perceived popular culture it will do so more or less for a period of time and will then register a systems error or, more specifically in this case a "fuck her, let her go, don't be stupid, don't let her go" moment of annoyance, resentment, or rage.

While I certainly cannot support an attitude of unadulterated selfishness in heterosexual relationships, it seems to me that becoming the 'vagina man' is more about meeting a demand of the woman than evolving a more real male response to her. I can hear the feminist reader growl at this point at the thought of real male responses and the connotations of 'biggest dick' culture that is associated with 'real men'. I do not intend this at all. Rather I suggest that there must exist untried possibilities which might reside between the 'beating with big dicks predicated on underlying insecurity' and the apparently

perfect 'vagina man'. I have suggested this in terms of the systemic debate in the literature around the issue too: that there are either female feminist critiques of 'wrong' systemic positions which accuse classical systemic formulations of ignoring gender and focusing on hierarchy, or there are men who become theoretical vagina-men and who throw their lots in with the feminists – I have asked, 'where is the truly male voice in the systemic literature?'

It ought to be fairly clear that my position suggests that part of the un-evolved (not permitted to evolve by both patriarchy and feminism) male voice or position has everything to do with the absence of male voices (helpful fathers), primitive envy of the centrality of women in society whether they are oppressed or not, and a fundamental need to explore an own identity even if 'mother' is where we start from. And yet the Cosmo prescriptions to wanna-be vagina men have to do with extending their repertoires to be more than 'draconian' males and to be converts to the sorts of things that C and I study and perform with such dedication. The simple act of 'doing for', or 'seeking recognition from' women through doing and being more than your male counterparts who have yet to learn the 'winning ways' contrives to exacerbate the annoyance, resentment and rage in heterosexual relationships in my view. This is so because, as I see it, this entails a turning of the back by the vagina-man on 'father' and on other men in general and a capitulation where mother is concerned. This, as has already been discussed in response to R's narrative, intensifies feelings of trappedness, appears fleetingly to ease the

tensions between the sexes, but ultimately births an intense need for definition of self and kind on the part of the male and we see eruptions of rage, bubblings of resentment, and simmerings of annoyance. It is little wonder that there is a reversion to the pathos of the vulnerable 'penis man' in C's narrative – "I treat complaints in a light hearted fashion (where is the sensitivity?). I also decided on a more selfish attitude for myself, for example, a night with the boys (surprise, a return to a quest for something male), hamburgers for supper, a weekend of sport".

The narrative seems to speak so loudly of a lack of any change of existing patterns. It speaks rather of the minor morphogenic and morphostatic shifts that a system without feedback engages in while all the time swearing blindly, literally, that it is changing.

In my own tiny autopoietically arranged globe it makes sense to me that a recognition of the pathos of our condition, a recognition of the primitive envy that exists on the part of men for women, and a recognition of a need to evolve a male voice through contact with other men and a discovery of 'father' is perhaps a more helpful way forward: a male pregnancy full of possible riches and a chance to birth ourselves to some degree.

In conversation with people that have read popular books which speak of bridging the communication gap between the male and female planets, it seems to be the case that erections of any kind – but in relation to C, erections of carports in particular – are to be understood as attempts to communicate affections and caring. Even in relation to C's 'vagina-man'

behaviour it can be understood to be indicative of 'showing' affection. Popular conceptions seem to stress that men are do-ers and showers, not always be-ers and verbal communicators. While this is thought to be a helpful notion regarding fundamental differences between the sexes, it needs to be taken further. The point that I feel is missed in defining men as do-ers and showers is that the basic capacity for men to be constructive, compassionate, or reparative is downplayed. In the popular culture context of defining men as less capable of communicating verbally (who set that as the standard anyway?, one might ask irreverently), the focus on the actions of men becomes a focus which is directed at the 'less than' aspect of their actions and the imputation seems to be that doing is not quite as helpful as being. A linear slugging match regarding the merits of the sexes and their respective styles needs to be averted at all costs - I simply wish to place greater emphasis on the inherent capacity for constructive behaviour in men and that while the inherent value of a carport is entirely relative, the gesture involving its erection can be understood to represent a primitive, brittle, rudimentary capacity for nurturance. While men might not be psychic garages or well equipped storehouses for themselves and for women, there is certainly something to work with in terms of their respective internal carports.

## CHAPTER 9

### **A LITTLE BOY LOOKING FOR FATHER : PATHOS AND INJURY CONTINUE**

#### **An introduction to P's Narrative**

P is a man for whom I have the greatest respect. He has the keenest wit and intellect that I know and his capacity to create and innovate using the written word is enormous. He is also capable of a level of candor and frankness in relation to himself that ought not to vilify but that ought rather to refresh. I am particularly grateful for his contribution to my text.

P is a highly educated and widely read English scholar. He is a gifted teacher and he enjoys the respect and admiration of most of his colleagues and the majority of his students. What appears below is his response to the request for a story about predominantly male views of annoyance and rage in intimate heterosexual relationships.

### P's Narrative

The weaker sex  
 Is the stronger sex  
 Because of the weakness  
 Of the stronger sex  
 For the weaker sex

Rage always describes an inverted triumph of the weaker party. Rage against the woman inevitably is the site of a rape or, more precisely, belongs to the same tawdry discourse. But is rape always a consequence of rage? Whatever it is, it is not simply – as the feminists would have it – a show of strength, a matter of power. Neither is it a matter of desire. If rape designates male control over the female, rage is that control shown wanting, its collapse, the brute response to events beyond male control.

I like to think to myself, when it comes round to it, that rage is a contemporary anachronism: an aberration of the human spirit. It's not that I don't think it occurs, but that it seems too commonplace, aesthetically vulgar. Yet, as I write, the media reports that there were 16 reported rapes this past weekend. 16 men, at one time or another within 48 hours, straddling a stranger or partial stranger (who happens to be a woman), ripping and prising off clothes, undergarments, sanitary towels, tampons in order to force an erect appendage into them. To force their way into the scabbed blood and oiliness of menstruation, along the dry walls of repugnance and terror. To me, it seems the anathema of desire. But is it? While I turn from the act of physical violence against woman in disgust, there is another voice that begins to

articulate itself. It is this latter voice that is perhaps the one that should be vocalised. Not that I adhere to the Dworkin notion that all penetration designates an act of violence but rather that relations between men and women are inherently based on a violence – perhaps the violence of slippage that is the sexual act, of trying to stay out, of keeping in – and that this violence is always present in variegated forms within any relationship.

I cannot speak of male rage until I have a frame of reference that is not merely an act of deference before the politically correct, the already assumed. It is altogether, a too easy assumption, a point of no return simply because it proves a point that should still be under investigation. This narrative, then, is simply a detailing of an event, a rage event, that is still lost between investigation and forgetfulness.

I have no idea how long the affair lasted. It lost track of time, it assumed a sick temporality all of its own. I know that it begun in earnest on Valentine's Day. She was engaged at the time and I met her a week before the whole thing started between the two of us. It was a petty 21<sup>st</sup> and I had reconciled myself to drink and distance. I've always liked to watch formal affairs from a distance and in the dark. It is the closest I can get to feeling what God must feel on His good nights. You can watch the bodies interact, the eager thrusts and parries, the rejections, the hopes dashed, the promises fulfilled, and the majority jilted somewhere in between. And I, without the threat of involvement.

I have been able, in the course of an evening, to chart a tryst, to detect a collapse.

I saw her as she lay below me on the grass embankment above the house. I enquired and discovered that she was shortly to be married to one of the band members. She was the only pretty one there. It came as some surprise then, when she later joined me in the dark and told me her dream of the night before. It was about animals being kept in a zoo and I must have clucked sympathetically and then she vanished. As she left I noted her long legs, her brown tendrils that fell to her waist, her clear blue eyes – weak, but pretty – and the smell that lingered after she left. A dark aroma with hints of late Saturday afternoon baking: cinnamon, all spice, even caramel. When I finally left the party I discovered a note tucked under my wiper. It read simply “Help, I’m being held captive in a castle. Please rescue me .....M”. There was also a telephone number.

I couldn’t resist. Frankly, I’m a sucker for the different, as corny as this was. And she was a painter and high school teacher. I called and during the conversation – that was both literary and obscurely erotic – she convinced herself, or I convinced her that her engagement was a farce and that she should break it off. In retrospect I think that her decision was already made and that I was the medium rather than the message. We agreed to meet on Valentine’s Day only if she had terminated her engagement. I was still under the impression that this scenario was a joke, albeit a romantic one, played out according to the rules of Byron or Shelley. She was late, but indeed we met.



She, distraught and triumphant and stunning, her dress swirling in the Muizenburg howl, her face all bone and swollen lips. She could, indeed, strike a pose. All pinks and flowing in a deserted dust bowl of a parking lot. We returned to the house I was living in and fucked early the next morning, after an evening of intense, but rather empty conversation.

It was the sex that started the real troubles. In the middle of the first encounter – which was a languid, almost stopping, affair – she started howling into the night. A more resolute ego would have taken this as a sign of an ability to perform, but I was not fooled. The cries were too extravagant, too loud to pass for the upper reaches of desire. They were, in fact, blatantly fraudulent, like someone laughing long before the punch-line. These cries were simply scary. And eerie. I naturally attempted to stop the charade. I asked what was wrong, she said that nothing was and so we continued to my end (God knows about hers). Followed by an uneasy sleep. She was fine in the morning: coy but confident, intimate without excess. In fact, perfectly normal.

By the second time, a week later, I took to covering her mouth with my hand during the act, or, rather, during her outbursts during the act, forcing my palm down on her mouth to stop the clamour. Desire had vanished and was replaced by a grotesque fascination. A little like those curious drivers that slow down to glimpse at the road fatality: they who are shocked by what they witness but cannot help witnessing it all the same. They who simply had to. What intrigued me about my own behaviour in all this is that I remained

indignantly tumescent throughout. I, whose phallus would normally falter under such strange circumstances, I the gentleman to the end. It was not long after this weekly encounter had started that I realised that my ability to perform was dependent on her exclamations. I liked them no more than before but began to depend on the very bad timing in order to see me through to my despondent climax. She was obviously in pain but I was beyond caring. The hysteria implicit had paradoxically become part of the thrill.

She told me about the fact that her father and her brother had committed suicide, her brother a mere two years ago, and of course my sympathy washed away her connubial vocality with reasons. Freud was wrong in presupposing the trivia of the day indicated libidinal urges smothered by society. For her, the sexual act betrayed the pain of the everyday. That, however, didn't stop me. If anything it provided an added urge. We had been 'lovers' for almost two months when I started insisting that I only wanted anal sex. I denied her any form of vaginal penetration. As a rule. In moments of self-reflexivity – and they were rare concerning her – I would validate my desire by saying that she looked so much better from behind (come to think of it, I still hold emphatically to that thesis). The horrible, crass point of it all was that I wanted to hurt her. Oh, I was gentle enough and the act was done given her consent, even her enjoyment, but it was, thankfully, marked by her lack of labial ululation. And there is one moment, in the midst of this degrading affair, that I entering her in the early Monday morning, the sun groping its way to being, the vision of her raised on her haunches in the still

dark, the legs and slim body poised and then responding was indeed gorgeous.

It was a natural progression from there to start denying her any form of sex at all. I still wanted her but distrusted myself because I was aware of the perversity that it involved. I was maiming myself in the crippling of her. This refusal prompted her to more and more extreme measures. She would climb rejected out of the naked bed we shared and dance round the pool – much to the chagrin and clandestine pleasure of the neighbours.

In desperation, she started avoiding work (she was a teacher at a school at Khyalitsha) and I would arrive home in the afternoons to find her naked in the lounge, cross legged and painting huge canvases that portrayed me as a bleeding, amputated monster – I always carried a grin and distended green eyes. After three or four days of this pattern, she refused to wear clothes at all. Covered in paint, she would sit on the kitchen floor working and crying. I felt nothing but scorn.

I chose a date, about a week hence, and described exactly what would happen. We would return to her house, she lived in a cottage at the bottom of a property that belonged to her mother, have sex, normal sex, on the Friday and Saturday, I would serve her breakfast on the Sunday, we would spend the day in bed and I would leave, never to see her again, on the evening of that day. The chosen weekend played itself out to perfection; the sex was good and lingering (dare I say considerate, even loving), the last meal was served and she seemed to comply in a way that left me thinking that I really had

control over my destiny at least. The termination, however, didn't go the way it should of. She excused herself while her mother was off at Mass and never returned. I, eager to terminate this performance went to find her and there she was, seated on the floor of her mother's bathroom, with a vast assortment of drugs before her – from Imodium to Valium – selecting the flavour of her finish.

I left her place in Somerset West late that night with hardly any promises made, her suicide aborted and derided and the glee of driving home alone and free. It was, in retrospect, a dark empty drive home. By the time I reached Kommetjie I found that the baboons had stolen down the mountain, devoured my garbage and the dog she gave me was cowering in the remains of the moon.

Somewhere in that there is a moral.

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One of the most refreshing and personally reassuring aspects of P's narrative is that it confirms the idea that in the assertion of brute force and overt control, there exists a more subtle blind helplessness and lack of that control and that, rather than place the annoyed or angry male in charge or in control, the expression of the overt rage locates him at the mercy of that rage.

Also confirming, is the extent to which P – unlike male feminist writers, vagina men, or co-optees – is able to catch himself short of a full blooded,

naïve and non-self reflexive condemnation of male annoyance, rage or nihilism in relation to women, and to direct his attention to the “other voice that begins to articulate itself” inside him which has little to do with “an act of deference before the politically correct”. While this voice is too readily tamed in the vagina men and feminist co-optees, P is refreshingly candid about its existence and perhaps even the extent to which part of the male condition – as lived by him and as related to in him by me – might have to do with a silent sadism or less dramatic pleasurable ‘violence’ in relation to women:- the sort of ‘normal’ or ‘inevitable’ violence that may have to do with the act of penetration itself, with the possible (but seldom if ever articulated) pleasure contingent upon the ‘appreciation’ of perceived figure flaws in women such as ‘hang bums,’ ‘hail-damaged’ thighs and buttocks, and perhaps even expressions of pain or misery.

The writer is particularly struck by P’s intrigue at his own “indignant tumescence throughout” and suggests that to defer to the politically correct position systematically is to avoid explaining and acknowledging full and partial erections in response to female misery, female distress, female subjugation at the hands of the palm which stops the clamor and what these might mean.

In respect of the possible meanings of this tumescence, this writer again refers to his central thesis which suggests that male potency – rather than indicating perpetual subjugation and dominion over women – has only something to do with it and more to do with the business of less evolved or

less “resolute egos” which need to subjugate in order not to fragment or be engulfed. P owns up to the sense of fragmentation in the presence of the woman and the extent to which this experience is “eerie” and “scary” particularly when he cannot feel in charge of the first sexual encounter and begins to mistrust his own competence in it.

Further, the story speaks of an overwhelming inability to separate from the woman who is actually so central in the story, although apparently subjugated to the position of nameless “she”. P sleeps uneasily in spite of his “end” being achieved. Also, P refer to his “despondent” climaxes which appear to have everything to do with an inability to separate his pleasure from being able to serve her in a way that is felt to be convincing and competent.

It would seem that women could become so frightening to men that to stay in close relationship with them might threaten engulfment. I suggest that the denial of vaginal sex is intimately bound up with the difficulty of staying in relationship with a woman who may envelop so fully or frequently that the man might begin to fear his disappearance and to feel his insubstantiality most acutely. The emergence of ‘hurtful’ anal sex seems to afford P a ‘separateness’ in the contact in much the same way as a male partner’s controlling and rage create space for that partner while simultaneously not allowing the woman to abandon him.

This seems to reflect the suggestions made in the more psychoanalytic aspects of the theoretical discussion to the effect that developmentally, the male is significantly worse off than the female in that without father as an

available and benign figure around whom a different-from-mother identity can be cemented, there will always be the threat of engulfment by mother, whereas for the woman, identity formation is contingent upon some separation from the original mother but a concomitant identification with that same primary figure.

This writer views it as little co-incidence that P's father does not feature in the story at all, but 'her' mother does. And although 'her' mother seems to lack nurturant aspects, the two women are left together at the end of the narrative while, whereas P feels relieved at having escaped "with hardly any promises made", he is completely and poignantly alone with his primitive primates, the lone hound and the mangy moon.

It is my view that the male condition, if unmitigated by an available, benevolent and forgiving father, is an extremely lonely and vulnerable one.

I hold fairly emphatically to the idea that engagement with women is fairly frightening for men in the absence of control and that non-engagement is equally frightening in the absence of a sound and gentle father. Also, in the presence of gentle and equipping fathering, both aloneness and engagement could be attended to with more competence and less fear of either a drift into absolute obscurity in the former case or an engulfment in the latter. When there is control of the order of the description of "exactly what would happen" choreographically, there can be some ease symbolized in the caring and considerate intercourse. When there is no control, there must be hurt to create difference or separateness in the context of relationship, or removal

from that relationship to attend to an own primitive loneliness and lostness embodied in the narrative symbol of the ape.

An odd, but not implausible thought might be that anal sex with 'her' represents not only the attack necessary to feel safe and distant, but might even simultaneously represent a quest for the absent father.

Most remarkable is that P – like A, C and R – is known to those around him as a kind, considerate, sensitive and gentle man – perhaps even a prize catch and that he knows himself to be a “gentleman to the end”. And yet, these markers notwithstanding, there are some subtle and less subtle violences perpetrated against 'her' – the nameless her – in the text and in the real relationship. Perhaps, above all else, I wish to indicate and to confirm (by asking other men) to my confused self (and perhaps to my vagina men theoretical colleagues) that there is more to think about than deference to a 'men ought not to behave badly' position if, in the context of such apparent ordinariness, such annoyances and rages rear their respective heads. P puts this line of thinking most eloquently: “It is altogether, a too easy assumption, a point of no return simply because it proves a point that should still be under investigation ... (a point heretofore) still lost between investigation and forgetfulness”.



## CHAPTER 10

**DEPRIVATION OF SUBJECTIVITY?****Subjectivity exists only in the relatively autonomous individual**

Early on in this text, I made allusion to the notion (Goldner, 1988) that patriarchy had deprived women of their subjectivity. This seems to be a fairly curious statement to make in view of the fact that, by definition, subjectivity seems to be relatively immune to influence, instructive interaction or definition by 'other'. Consequently, subjectivity would seem to be something that cannot be removed from anybody who is in possession of their faculties. In fact, Goldner (1988) herself goes on to suggest, **in relation to female subjectivity**, that it was when women began to convene conversations with one another and when they began to share their experiences with one another that some sort of emancipatory evolution was set in motion. The fact that there were experiences to share and a language to share those experiences in again underscores my point that subjectivity cannot be stripped or removed. It might be held with greater or lesser conviction in the face of oppression and in the face of there being no consensual validation for the subjectively held ideas, but subjectivity per se is rather incorruptible. That men operating within the patriarchal frame oppressed women is not contested here – what is contested is the notion that men robbed women of their subjectivity. What is being suggested further is the notion that woman ultimately separated from

men or the influence of patriarchy and that this act of separation and the contingent constitution of sororities was central to the freedom of women. More than this, what is being suggested is that the real strength of women lies in their ability to define a fairly autonomous position for themselves in relation to men and that this pattern of the individuation of women through discovering one-another is an isomorphism for psychoanalytic ideas about early female development – the return of women to sameness (away from father and toward mother) as a mark of induction into adulthood.

As the body of this text has been developed, it could be loosely argued that I have shared the view that over time, women operating within certain feminist frames have robbed men of their subjectivity. I again consider, rather swiftly, the notion that this robbing of subjectivity is semantically impossible in terms of my own earlier argument. However, I think it is plausible to put forward a case for the loss of male subjectivity if one is able to substantiate a notion that men lack a degree of autonomy. In the absence of such autonomy, subjectivity is corruptible. Throughout the body of this text I have been making a case for the idea that men have not been afforded the opportunity to evolve essential ideas about themselves and about their gender as a result of a certain 'deference before the politically correct.' When considered across time the problem of male subjectivity is compounded and made doubly tragic in view of the fact that not only did patriarchy itself deny men an opportunity to explore certain facets of maleness which did not have to do with power and force, but in the subversion (deserved) of patriarchy by

the feminists, men are again being denied the opportunity of evolving an own identity. Men are required to, **or elect to**, defer to being the sorts of men that women want them to be. The so-called 'vagina man' would be one illustration of this phenomenon. It is being argued that in both the act of deference to women as well as in the act of living amongst limited men there is a social recreation of the psychoanalytic notions pertaining to the origins of maleness.

It was the notion that there seemed to be very little unashamed or autonomous writing about what constitutes the 'true' male position, and the perception that there was too much defection on the part of some male writers (the male feminists) to the feminist camp where volumes of politically correct literature is trotted out that, in part, inspired this text. With no disrespect intended to these 'male feminist co-optees' who try so desperately not to put a foot wrong in their journal articles and at conferences, I personally find it exceptionally hard to envisage these mortals not having angry thoughts, rage filled moments, the occasional outburst, and the occasional irreverent thought in relation to the women in their lives. It is my contention that these are too carefully screened and partialled out in the interests (sincere and heartfelt, I am convinced) of being politically correct and therefore too squeaky clean. 'Come on chaps,' I am tempted to proffer, 'what goes on in your own relationships?'

It has been my intention to offer a sincere, candid, **empathic** exploration of the 'darker side' of maleness and it has been my passionate belief that such an exploration might hold some of the keys to what is essentially male

that has not been given an opportunity to breathe in the patriarchal system initially and in the 'new' 'emancipated' system currently. It is the intention of this chapter to tentatively put forward an un-convoluted summary of the neophyte themes that seem, in my view, to characterize some of the male condition. It is hoped that other male voices might step forward and courageously and respectfully add their stories to the themes proffered here – irrespective of how politically incorrect they might seem. It is suggested that a sharing and an owning of some of these themes might begin to mimic the experience of women who sought to define themselves through the constitution of dialogical domains and sororities in which a modicum of consensual validation evolved. It is further suggested that an empathic listening on the part of feminists to the sorts of struggles that I believe men are located in might be more helpful than what I believe to be equally oppressive but exceedingly well intentioned efforts to co-opt or to 'show the way'. These latterly mentioned 'engaged' efforts (which extend beyond empathy) simply serve to recreate a primitive male experience of fear of engulfment and prevent the evolution of a male subjectivity or identity.

My evolving understanding in relation to male experience points in the direction of the tentative ideas put forward in the remainder of this chapter. Rather than to solicit condemnation, I hope that I will provoke a genuine empathy for the pathos of the male condition as well as a respect for it. I tend to feel that the male is a significantly more vulnerable creature than he is ever willing to candidly own up to. This vulnerability derives from the limited

set of options that patriarchy has conferred upon men. It has taught men to attack, oppress and to defend, but to be circumspect in relation to vulnerability and emotionality. It has left men with a language of oppression, but not with a language of healing, reparation and sensitivity. This does not for a moment suggest that the prototypes for these possibilities do not exist. Neither does it suggest that there aren't certain individual men who are a little ahead of their time phylogenetically speaking. Rather it suggests that vulnerability is seldom, if ever, acknowledged and if it is there appears to be no gentle language for tending to it. Either that, or that however gentle the language is, the autopoietically organized male organism cannot yet make anything of value of it when such exposure to a benign and even caring medium has taken place.

I have a hunch that men are consequently rather trapped beings who may even sense and know that the patriarchal way of doing things has left them under-skilled. Yet they are unable to evolve new skills as they have not had, as a function of history, much experience of alternatives. My hunch is that women on the other hand have been cast in a mould of being nurturant homemakers by patriarchy and have experience of the tender.

Simultaneously though, the oppressive aspects of patriarchy have also served as a medium in which cultures of resistance, stridence and firmness have been evolved. Women have access to both the boardroom and the more gentle domains. Men seem to be left battling in the boardroom without

sufficiently evolved skills to engage in the gentler domains. 'Women have two. Men have one.'

I get a fairly strong sense that women fail to understand the extent to which male rage is a comment on inadequacy and vulnerability. While words to the effect of 'he gets so angry because he feels so out of control or inferior' are trotted out glibly, I wonder whether there is a deep appreciation for the extent to which male rage is evidence of trappedness and the extent to which the rage itself is profoundly trapping and poignantly painful.

My evolving sense is that a profound envy belies the manner in which men view women. This envy frequently excites deleterious rage and the handling of that rage by practitioners, women and other men might only excite further envy. In this text I hope to have complexified systemic notions of the maintenance of violence in couple's relationships in a fairly novel way without suggesting the non-culpability of the man. This envy of women has to do, in my view, with their perceived capacity to survive, their perceived robustness, their ability to move between more erect behaviours on the one hand and more absorbing behaviours on the other, their centrality on the process of procreation, and is predicated upon some fairly primitive psychoanalytic notions pertaining to early development.

The most significant of the psychodynamic issues has to do with the notion that men have a significantly more complicated individuation task than do women. Women start off life the same as mother, identify with father briefly, and then are required to return to sameness (mother). Men on the

other hand begin life being cared for by my mother who is, by biological distinction, different. In order to function as a grown man, there needs to be an identification with father who is frequently unavailable, unable, or uncomfortable (or perceived to be these). This is an extremely complex process which carries with it the permanent threat of re-engulfment by mother, rejection by father or a homosexual encounter with him. A notion that I have toyed with is that the male position is significantly less separate and autonomous than the female one. Men need to reassure themselves of this separateness through acts of 'violence' against women, whereas this need for separateness is not nearly as acute for the heterosexual women. My tentative assertion is that the male condition is about a brittle but continuous attempt at the assertion of separateness through rage and more mild forms of anger or annoyance.

This might then import that men are rather more violent and sadistic than women and that this constitutes the 'current nature of the beast.' I do not for a moment suggest that women may not be sadistic ('god forbid') or that one needs to accept sadism as endemic to the male condition in perpetuity (a serious, 'god forbid'). Rather, I attempt to point to the fact that instead of being abhorred by this sadism, one might understand it a little better and even view it as an undesirable 'normalcy' of sorts.

I guess that my biggest grumble during the authorship of my thesis is that I have felt that the dawning of feminism has brought with it a denial of subjectivity for men. A curious thought when one considers my earlier

argument that the sentient cannot, by definition, be robbed of their subjectivity. Sentience is though a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the maintenance of subjectivity. The sufficient condition is a degree of autonomy and separateness. In the body of this chapter and elsewhere in the text I have mooted the notion that men find the achievement of a modicum of separateness from women exceedingly difficult and that violence is the necessary relational sequel to this state of affairs. In the next chapter I make room for a female, feminist voice – an exercise that puts these notions to the test, experientially. The reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions in terms of the following questions (and any others he or she may wish to add):

1. Are overlapping narratives possible, or is a certain amount of violence inevitable?
2. Is a degree of thrust and parry not essential to the functioning of heterosexual relationships? Put differently, is a degree of violence, penetration and engulfment not a systems specification where heterosexual relationships are concerned?
3. Do men depend on women and simultaneously resent this dependence? Is this embodied in my own ambivalence about desperately wanting a feminist contribution but feeling simultaneously uneasy about giving the feminist the final, uncommented-upon, word.



4. If men find it difficult to articulate their autonomy in terms of the female (mother), does this not begin to impute that they might well be robbed of their subjectivity by women? This robbing would take place (or be allowed to happen) if the reader agrees that there is merit in the lack of separateness hypothesis. If the reader refutes the lack of separateness hypothesis, then the subjective opinion held by myself that men struggle with separateness gains credibility and stands in and of itself. Either way, I want to press the notion that men struggle with autonomy more than their female counterparts.
5. If men do not depend on women and if my notion that relative separateness is impossible as an end point is invalid, then is it not true that the subjective notions advanced by myself must necessarily stand whether women approve of them or not?

## CHAPTER 11

### MY KINGDOM FOR SOME SEPARATENESS

My Supervisor will vouch for the fact that the EPILOGUE to this text has already been written and that this chapter actually represents the last word in this text although, to simple inspection, the EPILOGUE certainly would seem to be located at the conventional 'end' to this document.

I thought that the only way of completing this sort of research would be by introducing a female voice. I feel compelled (and driven by a male prerogative of dependence – individuation) to allow my ideas to overlap with those of a feminist, or put less gently, I feel compelled to put my ideas up for scrutiny by a feminist. I cannot not do this as this sort of behaviour is argued to be a specifier of the male condition. Consequently I asked a feminist acquaintance to comment on the narratives in this text as well as on my interpretative gestures in relation to these.

My hunch is that these comments (which I understand will take the form of cartoons) might shed a speckled beam of light on the questions posed toward the end of the previous chapter and, at the process level, on this entire work. I smile rather wryly as the choreographer of the process, knowing on the one hand how being the sole choreographer felt too 'out on a limb' and knowing on the other how inviting a feminist choreographer felt a little threatening. I also smile wryly as I have experienced the impossibility of purely overlapping narratives without violence. And I smile contentedly as I

relish the prospect that such an attempt at overlapping narratives (which cannot not be just a little violent) might yield exciting information about the essential man. What I look forward to most is answering my own curiosity as to whether there can be any emphatic appreciation of the male point of view as presented by myself – whatever the response to my sincere and subjectively responsible attempt to define myself and some of my kind, it will certainly be illuminating. This appreciation may be overt and may be located in the dialogue itself, it may pertain more covertly, or it may not exist at all. In all events I shall be looking for a sign that the pain, pathos, or trappedness of the male position has been understood. Let us look for the answers that make the most sense to each of us.

# CRISIS

"THE PRIDE OF THINE HEART  
HATH DECEIVED THEE, THOU  
THAT DWELLEST IN THE  
CLEFTS OF THE ROCK... THAT  
SAITH IN HIS HEART - WHO  
SHALL BRING ME DOWN TO  
THE GROUND?"



"THOUGH THOU EXALT THYSELF  
AS THE EAGLE, AND SET THY  
NEST AMONG THE STARS..."



"THENCE WILL I BRING  
THEE DOWN!"  
HABAKKUK 2



THIS AGE IS ENDING.

"THE SONGS OF THE TEMPLE SHALL BE HOWLINGS, AND THERE SHALL BE MANY DEAD BODIES."

BITCH!  
I'LL SHOW YOU--



THAT'S ENOUGH, YOU!



"AND ON THAT DAY I WILL CAUSE THE SUN TO GO DOWN AT NOON... I WILL TURN YOUR FEASTS INTO MOURNING, AND ALL YOUR SONGS INTO LAMENTATION."  
The Book of Amos, Ch 8.

AAHHH!

LOVE...





NO.

SHADOW.



oops!  
sorry!



Y-Y-YOU  
WANT US TO  
F-F-FIGHT THAT  
THING?



I DO NOT  
FEAR YOU, SATAN!  
I COMMAND YOU - BEGONE -  
AND YOU ARE FORCED  
TO OBEY!

BEGONE  
WHELP OF  
GIRL!



THE ONLY  
THING IS, OF COURSE,  
I'M VULNERABLE  
NOW.

I AM  
AT YOUR  
MERCY, MY  
LADY.



NO MAN  
CAN HELP ME.  
COME, HELP. IT'S  
PROBABLY WITILE  
TO  
ASK A GIRL  
FOR HELP





LET GIRL IN  
DECISION -- TO  
BEING MAKE THE  
POINT, WHEN A COUNCILOR  
SINCE MOMENT THAT HAD  
TO -- IS COME UP IN THAT  
BRECT PINGS -- ALLIES  
LIKE THE POWER OF THE  
IS IN THE TEMPLE.  
THE  
KAR PLEASE

YOUR...  
I COULD BE  
YOU HELP ME.  
I GOOD IS  
BETTER ACQUAINTED.  
I SHOULD GET  
YOU AND

YOU  
HAVE LOTS  
TO  
GIVE ME!



GO TO  
HE!!

FATHER  
FIGURE?





HMMM!  
AND NOTHING  
STIMULATES  
CONVERSATION  
LIKE A MOUTHFUL  
OF NOVOCAINE,  
dental instruments  
and fingers!



AND A PUNY  
LITTLE MORTAL CLAIMS  
SHE KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT  
THE LORD OF LIES. LET  
US SEE!

OLD WIVES  
TALES. ALL YOU  
GIRLS THINK YOU  
KNOW BETTER-GIRLS!



\*RIPE\*

BADS POW



TEMPTRESS.



HAHAHA!



I AM  
ONLY ASKING  
THE BITCH FOR INFO  
COS ITS P.C. - BEFORE  
THIS, I WOULD NOT HAVE  
BOTHERED ABOUT GIRLS  
AND THEIR OPINION!  
WHAT A TOTAL  
DRAG--



IN THE NAME OF THE PSYCHOLOGIST I BANISH YOU!

IN THE NAME OF MEN I BANISH YOU!

NOW YOUR WHOLE WORLD WILL BURN!

YOUR PEOPLE WILL SCREAM AND BEG FOR MERCY THAT NEVER COMES! ALL YOUR SONGS WILL BE LAMENTATIONS! ALL YOUR FEASTS WILL BE SPOILED!

I AM HE WHO WILL DO THIS! I AM HE WHO DARES TO SAY NO!

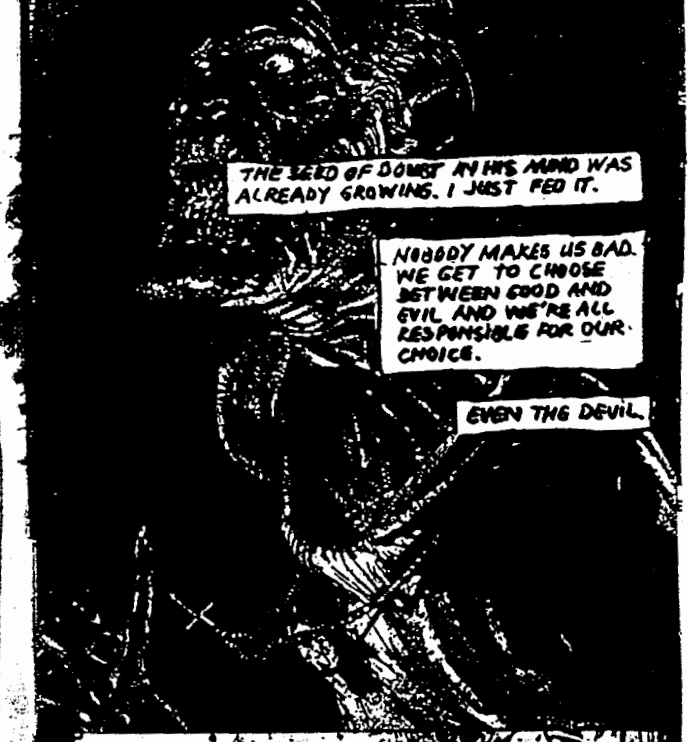


MAYBE THE MIDLIFE CRISIS HIT ME EARLY AND I WON'T BE ABLE TO STACULATE!

I WAS WRONG.

INNOCENT!

SATAN HAD TOLD SO MANY LIES, HE HIMSELF NO LONGER KNEW WHAT WAS TRUE. HE WAS GOING INSANE, UNABLE TO LIVE WITH THE WEIGHT OF HIS OWN VEHAL SINS



THE SEED OF DOUBT IN HIS MIND WAS ALREADY GROWING. I JUST FED IT.

NOBODY MAKES US BAD. WE GET TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL AND WE'RE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR CHOICE.

EVEN THE DEVIL.

KLICK!

NO ONE OF THE WICARIO SHALL UNDERSTAND, BUT THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND.  
Panel 1240

## CHAPTER 12

**AN EPILOGUE TOGETHER WITH SOME MALE LITERARY FRIENDS**

I feel that I have proffered enough on the question of male annoyance/rage and must therefore turn to the question of beginning to script the end. At the inception of this document I signalled my intention to be personally involved in the research, an intention which some might say need not have been indicated at all in view of the cybernetics of cybernetics position that participant observation is necessarily the inevitable sequel to any attempt at discovery through observation (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Therefore, I think that a helpful point of departure for this last short journey to the end would be an examination, or rather a sharing, of some of the important sentiments that I have experienced prior to, during, and upon reflection on my journey of discovery – my adventure in the enigmatic and serendipitous continent of male annoyance/rage.

In order that they might serve as conduits for these reflections, I have conjured up three male characters from literature. Each of these men, as well as the literary tensions between them, convey something of what I have been attempting to articulate and something of what I have felt throughout the discovery process. The men whom I invite in at the end are Don Quixote, intrepid but somewhat 'crazy' knight, journeyman, and adventurer who mirrors

my own madness at attempting to examine the politically correct feminist discourse; Sancho Panza, the faithful squire who seems to be a significantly more marginal sidekick and caregiver to the central knight and who, for me, represents a lost permissiveness in men in relation to themselves – a permissiveness that was denied us by patriarchy and which feminist prescriptions continue to deny us; and Miguel de Cervantes, the author-as-person who breathed life into these fictional characters while languishing in a Spanish jail who, like me, feels trapped by the injunctions of patriarchy, chivalry, and his time.

### **Don Quixote: The embodiment of male pathos in patriarchy**

One part of myself that lives in this thesis is a part that is concerned (when I feel stronger) and fretful (when I feel less strong) that I have overstepped the mark in relation to defining maleness by reverting to 'offensive' notions that have to do with an unashamed recognition of the annoyance, sadism, and envy inherent in the male condition which ought to have been grown out of long ago as women began to understand things about the men they had to contend with. Related concerned parts derive from the fact that while sincere efforts have been made in relation to articulating a fundamentally separate discourse of men by men, an acknowledgement of this discourse is still – somewhere in the recesses of my stream of consciousness – dependent on the sanction or permission of women and this is evidenced by the fretfulness. This gives rise to a rather exposed and

precariously placed feeling on my part suggesting that while a less ashamed, less apologetic and therefore less fettered attempt has been made to define the male, there is still a modicum of curiosity about how women might respond to this neophyte attempt at definition from within male ranks and a real concern about whether it will be allowed breathing room as a possible overlapping narrative of value by feminists. The implication is that somewhere I am not free, even though I have spoken of the significance of unashamed and autonomous definition.

I suggest that this paradoxical state of affairs – asking for freedom and, in the asking, negating it – is, rather than being confounding, instructive regarding the current less than well evolved nature of the male position, which seems so thoroughly bound and trapped. And it puts me in touch with what I believe to be typical male experience of concern about substance and a subtle feeling of hollowness in spite of a very robust and even overtly 'in charge' exterior. As I have written, I have experienced this rather acutely – on the one hand I have felt assured of the legitimacy of my cause in terms of ferreting out a lost male voice, and on the other, I have been troubled by the inadequacy of this voice, the possibility that I might be attacked by the feminists for articulating it and more specifically that this attack might make me shrink, and the perpetual concern that women will misconstrue this voice as intentionally brutal.

Similarly, I suppose that in my intimate relationships with women there has been concern and fretfulness about how much anger I am entitled to without thinking of myself as abusive. This is an easy question to answer in extremis as beatings and poundings are certainly taboo. Ex extremis, this is less easy to fathom out and I am not entirely convinced that women are entitled to answer this question for me. If they do, then I may be robbed a second time (the first hi-jacking happened at the hands of patriarchy) of an opportunity to work things out for myself. Not feeling entirely comfortable with women's solutions to men's concerns, and not feeling entirely fairly treated by patriarchs, modern men are left in something of a quandary.

Don Quixote, the intrepid knight, embodies this fundamental male anxiety in my view as he blithely strives to be powerfully chivalrous in his journey and his quest to please Ismaralda at an enormous personal cost. I feel that patriarchy has positioned men as eternal tilters-at-windmills bound by an absurd code, which is both brutal and bruising. This code has everything to do with misplaced male responsibility in the form of seeing "thirty outrageous giants, whom I intend to encounter" (Cervantes, 1930, p.43) rather than seeing the 30 or 40 benign windmills ; a sense that we ought not to be Sancho Panza sissies who need to be admonished or patronized to the effect that "if thou art afraid, go aside and say thy prayers, for I am resolved to engage in a dreadful unequal combat against them all" (Cervantes, 1930, p.44) ; a sense that even when we are broken, bruised and beaten we "do not

complain of the pain ... Because a Knight Errant must never complain of his wounds though his bowels were dropping through them" (Cervantes, 1930, p.45); and a ridiculous sense that our lances are everything – to the point that when these are smashed into "shivers," (Cervantes, 1930, p.45) we are encouraged to adhere to the tales regarding great Spanish Knights who then uproot trees and affix spear tips to them so that they may continue to smite and that, by *reductio ad absurdum* inference, when these makeshift lances are themselves in "shivers" and shards, we are again expected to take pencil stompies and affix drawing pins to them so that we might still be able to conquer marauding nations. There is no room for helplessness, requests for assistance, and self-care.

For me, the tossed and pounded Don Quixote is the epitome of the sort of pathos that inheres in the male condition as an artefact of ridiculous patriarchal injunctions regarding performance. Patriarchy prescribes chivalrous enterings into the fray in an erect, charging, lance-like fashion without a meta-awareness that the battle might not exist in the first place or that the charge is predicated upon splintered foundations. Don Quixote lacks this awareness (although Cervantes does not) and while he does not permit himself a drink in the aftermath of the tilt, he eagerly glugs down the patriarchal prescriptions at an enormously bruising and sore cost to himself.

The insanity of the man, Don Quixote, is the insanity of the patriarchy that he serves, uncritically, to embody. Look at Don Quixote in isolation and the insanity is his and his alone. Juxtapose Don Quixote with Sancho Panca, and the insanity become societal, with the knight serving simply as the messenger or the vehicle.

### **Sancho Panca: Male potential personified**

While Don Quixote would appear to be placed at the centre of Cervantes' epic tale to the extent that the text is even named after him, and while throughout the text Don Quixote is centrally located on the potent steed, I feel that profound remarks might be seen to reside in the understated position of Sancho Panca, apparently peripherally located on an "ass" (Cervantes, 1930, p.44).

Patriarchy served to marginalize and retard the Sancho Panca in men and to place it at the bottom end of the equine evolutionary line, allegorically speaking. And yet, Sancho Panca is not as bruised as his titling-at-windmills master. He is sufficiently free to dispel patriarchal myths, to articulate fears and terrors, and to be caring, gentle, kind and permissive in relation to himself (and his apparent master who does not permit this care):



Sancho having thus obtained leave, fixed himself as orderly as he could upon his ass; and taking some victuals out of his wallet, fell to munching lustily as he rode behind his master; and ever and anon he lifted his bottle to his nose, and fetched such hearty pulls, that it would have made the best pampered vintner in Malaga a-dry to have seen him. (Cervantes, 1930, p.46)

For me, Sancho Panca is the 'main guy' as he represents the infinite potentiality that inheres in me. He represents the possibility of gentle fathering, kind fraternity, quiet strength, and sincere devotion to one another. And on a personal note he represents the mitigating possibility of rediscovering my humanity in the midst of a tilting rage.

#### **Miguel De Cervantes: Constructivist (in 1547) and participant observer**

For me, the genius of Cervantes resides in the manner in which he goes about breathing life into his express intention "to render abhorrent of men the false and absurd stories contained in the books of chivalry" (Cervantes, 1930, p.12) by juxtaposing Don Quixote (apparently seminal) with Sancho Panca (overtly peripheral).

Cervantes (1547 – 1616) himself, the non-fictional persona, struggled against abject poverty, relative obscurity and marginalization for most of his life. He is reported to have joined the Spanish or Italian army and to have sustained a maiming wound to his left arm in combat against the Turks which,

in his early years, he understood to have everything to do with living and being wounded "for the greater glory of the right" (Cervantes, 1930, p.12). But following a period of incarceration as a war detainee and a further period of incarceration as an artefact of owing his 'right' and glorious government money, he set about the production of the text, *Don Quixote*.

For me, Cervantes lived and therefore appreciated the extent to which patriarchal society had maiming, imprisoning and bruising sequelae for its men. Together, we have offered our respective stories. I offered my preface at the beginning. I endorse Cervantes' preface to *Don Quixote* at the end. What, a preface at the end? 'Certainly,' we would both say, 'overlapping narratives do not begin or end, and the reader, man or woman, is free to intersect (gently) at their leisure.

You may depend on my bare word, reader, without any farther security, that I could wish this offspring of my brain were as ingenious, sprightly, and accomplished as yourself could desire; but the mischief on't is, nature will have its course: every production must resemble its author and my unpolished understanding can produce nothing but what is very dull, very impertinent, and extravagant beyond imagination  
(Cervantes, 1930, p.1).

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