

Figures of clandestinity. Notes on a clinical case of occasional paedophilia*

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Abstract. The author talks about the affective *clandestinity* of a paedophile patient within the analytic relationship. It can be either a patient's communicative way of his childish world or the result of an unconscious perverse utilization of secrecy. It takes place when a condition that is polysemic, open, changing and potentially rich in meaning becomes a stable condition of splitting, that is to say, a kind of crypt or tomb. The clinical case presented points out the relationship between the continuous shifts of the patient's figures of clandestinity and the analyst's countertransferential continuous shifts between containment and refusal.

Key words: secrecy, clandestinity, refusal, paedophilia, psychic retreats.

«Only believers, who demand that science shall be a substitute for the catechism they have given up, it, will blame an investigator for developing or even transforming his views. We may take comfort, too for the slow advances of our scientific knowledge in the words of the poet: “*Was man nicht erfliegen kann, muss man erhinken. Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sünde zu hinken!*”¹» (Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920], p. 64)

Freud's secret

Psychoanalysis was originally proposed as a therapeutic method able to reveal a secret by decoding and interpreting hysterical symptoms.

At the beginning Freud was convinced that it would have been sufficient to make the patient conscious of his secret, make him confess and automatically reduce his sufferance.

In the clinical case of Fräulein Elisabeth von R., Freud (1892-1895, pp. 137-138) hypothesized that the patient «was conscious of the basis of her illness, that what she had in her consciousness was only a secret and not a foreign body. Looking at her, one could not help thinking of the poet's words: *Das Mäskchen da weissagt verborgnen Sinn*²». It would have been enough to show her

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¹ ‘What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping... The Book tells us it is no sin to limp’. These are the last lines of *Die Beiden Gulden*, a version by Freidrich Ruchert of one of the *makāmāt* (sermon) of al-Hariri. Freud quoted these same lines in a letter to Fleiss of October 20, 1895.

² [‘Her mask reveals a hidden sense.’ Adapted from Goethe's *Faust*, Part I (Scene 16).]. In this case it is nevertheless mistaken, as we will see later.

comprehension and her hope of recovery that would have resulted in her will to reveal her secret. During the analysis Elisabeth confessed to Freud something that she warned as a terrible and oppressive secret. After the confession the patient felt better, the symptoms seemed to have disappeared, but soon after it recurred. So Freud supposed that it was due to the revelation of a false secret, that is to say, a shielding secret that would keep at bay the intrusive investigations of the analyst. So he looked for the real secret in a so tenacious way that he probably wrung it out of her. After the new revelation, the patient felt really better. At this point Freud committed the unforgivable error to tell Elisabeth's secret to her mother. Thus the patient felt betrayed and did not want to see Freud any longer. We are at the dawn of psychoanalysis: from Freud's self-criticism will begin the great construction of the analytical relationship, that is based on the respect of secrecy, confidentiality and «absolute discretion».

Freud had probably told Elisabeth's secret to her mother because he hadn't recognised to himself the need to be assured about the effective capacity of his method through an evident success. In fact, he was not completely sure even if he affirmed in the end that he had «a kind of conviction that everything would come right» (p. 159). Again, he was not able at that time to focus on the value of the transference. Also in the case of Dora, which revealed many secrets to him, he was able to avoid the she abandoned the therapy. This is despite his strong conviction of having obtained a positive therapeutic result, as can be seen in this passage of *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1901, pp. 76-77): "When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips, betrayal oozes onto him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which is quite possible to accomplish". In spite of his excessive and illusory belief that the analytic revelation was a kind of ultimate truth, we can also find in Freud's words the importance of going beyond verbal communication and taking into account the body and nonverbal language. These features are not simple corollaries of verbal communication but fully integrated aspects of the *talking cure*. The sociologist Georg Simmel (1906, p. 456) gives full ethical legitimacy to all the components of the interpretation: "The greedy spying upon every unguarded word; the boring persistence of inquiry as to the meaning of every slight action, or tone of voice; what may be inferred from such and such expressions; what the blush at the mention of a given name may betray—all this does not overstep the boundary of external discretion; it is entirely the labour of one's own mind, and therefore apparently within the unquestionable rights of the agent". In *Psycho-Analysis and the Establishment of Facts in Legal Proceedings* (1906, p. 110), Freud returned to the subject and, by addressing the judges, emphasized the difference between the secret of a criminal and that of a neurotic person. «In the neurotic the secret is hidden from his own consciousness; in the criminal it is hidden only from you; in the former there is a genuine ignorance, though not an ignorance in every sense, while in the latter there is nothing but a pretence of ignorance». If the judge primarily wants that the content of the secret and the confession can be made public through the judicial procedure, the analyst on the contrary is interested in the deep motivation and the emotional connotations of the secret's construction. Thus, the analyst is obviously bound to secrecy once the secret had been revealed. Furthermore, Freud creates complications when he makes notice that, in assessing the truth, even the judges may be led astray during the investigation of the neurotic person that reacts to the interrogator as if he were guilty, up to the point of accusing himself (Girard, 1976).

In *Two Lies told by Children* (1913, p. 304) Freud seems to recognise the value of the secret, recognising that of lies: «...A number of lies told by well-brought-up children have a particular significance and should cause those in charge of him to reflect rather than be angry. These lies occur under the influence of excessive feelings of love, and become momentous when they lead to a misunderstanding between the child and the person it loves».

Thus, we can understand why, starting from Freud himself, the continuous shifts in the meaning of the secret occupy a lot of space in all the psychoanalytic literature.

About secrecy

«Medicine's business is, not to maintain silence concerning the secret places of the heart, but to discover them and tell all the truth about them» (Stefan Zweig, *Mental Healers*, 1932, p. 262)

In psychoanalytic literature there are many works about secret, understood both as beneficial and constructive and in terms of psychic retreat or of non-thinking. In 1976 the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* dedicates a monographic issue on the subject of secret that provides a deep discussion from many points of view. Guy Rosolato points out on the unsaid and on the polysemy of silence, intended not only as a narcissistic entrenchment or a defensive regression, but also as a need of time of *working through* and an expression of autonomy and freedom. Piera Castoriadis-Aulagner reminds us how the silence and the secret, what is left unsaid and what is said too much, what is said in broken words, the hinting and the double meanings don't have only a negative, inhibiting, pathogenic aspect. They also have a constructive and beneficial aspect when they express the importance of space for thought. It seems clear to me her agreement with the concept of the secret as *potential space* proposed, by Masud Khan (1983) from another theoretical perspective. According to Kahn the space of secret is necessary to the child so that he can construct and keep a «private tradition» of his growing and maturing Self. Khan extends Winnicott's (1965, 1971) ideas on the private space of the child and on his capacity to be alone even in the presence of the other (very briefly, on the construction of the potential space). Heinz Kohut (1977) takes on a similar position when identifies in the secret a healthy area able to keep itself from being invaded and to safeguard part of the Self. Marvin Margolis (1974) argues that when a child has secrets, he can feel separate, independent and single.

In opposition to these concepts, John Steiner (1993) proposes the concept of psychic retreat. The retreat is the result of powerful defensive systems the patient has constructed. They are defined as «pathological organisations of the personality» (p. 2) and are related to the splitting of parts of themselves, seen as monstrous and threatening the narcissistic identity. The retreat postulated by Steiner “serves as an area of the mind where reality does not to be faced, where phantasy and omnipotence can exist unchecked and where anything is permitted. This feature is often what makes the retreat so attractive to the patient and commonly involves the use of perverse or psychotic mechanisms” (p. 3). It is evident Steiner's familiarity with the observations of Donald Meltzer (1973), Herbert Rosenfeld (1971), and Betty Joseph (1982). Meltzer (1973) describes the submission of the Self to the bad object: when the dependence on the good internal object is made difficult by the masturbatory attacks and when the dependence on a good external object is not available. Rosenfeld (1971) describes a kind of personality characterised by the presence of a Mafia gang within the patient: this presence force the patient to conspiratorial ties, through which the most needed, dependent and creative aspects of the Self are submitted to those more destructive and perverse. About the mechanism of the sexualisation, Joseph (1982, p. 137) writes: «These patients, in early childhood, may have withdrawn into a secret world of violence, where one part of the self has been turned against another part, parts of the body being identified with parts of the offending object, and this violence could have been highly sexualized, masturbatory in nature, and often physically expressed». These authors come from the Kleinian tradition and focus on the destructive and defensive aspects of secrets.

André Carel (1992) distinguishes three types of space: the public space, the intimate space and the private space. The public space is qualified by the value of transparency and contains the known and the knowable data (civil identity, filiation, etc.). The intimate space is qualified by the value of secrecy and of confidentiality and appoints what is rightly protected from intrusions and violations of intimacy (thoughts, love life, sexual life, etc.). For the private space is qualified by the value of discretion and tact, it passes between the conflicts and antagonisms of the first two. When we attend to a malfunctioning in familiar or institutional environments, the public space becomes secret and

its rules of functioning confused; the intimate space becomes transparent with a feeling of showing and exhibiting; the private space contracts until it disappears.

Paul Claude Racamier (1995) starts from the reflections of Carel (1992) and emphasizes the useful distinction between the register of the *discreet*, which is like a half-closed door, and that of the *secret*, that is like a closed door. He declares that the secret possesses at least two natures: «one open and diversified...the other is compact and dark, (...) *the open secret is amiable and libidinous, whilst the closed secret is hostile and anti libidinous*» (p. 108). Whilst «the libidinous secrets are *the guarantee of the personal psychic intimacy*» (p. 110), «the anti libidinous secrets are fundamentally obstructive: mechanisms of the unsaid, like those of non-thinking...Their main function is in *hiding the source and so putting themselves at the service of narcissistic seduction and to its totalitarian version*» (p. 111).

Carlos Fishman (2004) shows that the obtuseness detected by Marvin Glasser (1988) in invariant paedophiles has nothing to do with a low IQ. Rather, it deals with a specific relationship that the paedophile entertains with his internal and external objects. This obtuseness is related to the presence of a secret daydream world eliciting an intense excitement.

Fiorangela Oneroso (1996, p. 33) writes: «What seems to be seductive is not so much the secret itself as its polysemy, that is to say, the fact that it can be welcome or unwelcome, confided or guarded, contained or expelled, lived negatively as a threatening, destructive, inextinguishable origins of guilt, or else positively, as a place of joyous and creative emotions, a practically inexhaustible treasure chest».

Annamaria Fiamminghi (2004) points out how the issue of the private space of the mind puts implies a duplicity. On one hand, the secret is a necessary condition for the development of independent thought and, on the other it is a place in which the patient can estrange himself. Fiamminghi writes: «It is essential the respect of the secret by the analyst and his tolerance of not knowing - sometimes for a long time - where the patient really is, still maintaining. As required by his specific function, the analyst must maintain a tension bent on creating the basis in order that the unsaid can be said, at least according to the patient's needs» (p. 634). The analyst therefore must proceed with respect for the patient's secrets and his right to privacy but cannot favour reticence if he finds traces of defence in it. Thus, he has to assess each time the meaning and the quality of the secret withdrawal.

Luiz Meyer (2005) says that the secret is constructed through the distortion of privacy by the contamination of intimacy. Giving a secret character to a private relationship means to attribute it a narcissistic quality and to bestow a connotation of power on the object on the possessor of the secret. The possibility or the threat of its disclosure serves for the manipulation of the relationship and the control over it.

Pietro R. Goisis (2009) focuses on the concepts of secret, lie, imitation, «as if» and False Self and consider them as strictly interconnected in a *continuum* in which one concept interlaces and overlaps another.

About clandestinity

«In any case, the wearer of a scramble suit was Everyman and in every combination (up to combination of a million and a half sub-bits) during the course of each hour. Hence, any description of him – or her – was meaningless» (Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, p. 23)

The term *clandestinity* comes from the Old Latin's adverb *clam* (hidden) and *intus* (inside). It defines more the operation of keeping hidden something from someone than the content of what is hidden. *Clandestinity* doesn't exist in Freud's vocabulary, although by definition the Unconscious is not only secret in its contents but also clandestine in its capacity to influence the subject's action. The specification of the defensive clandestine features permits them to be distinguished from defence mechanisms better known and definite as denial and repression.

Marta Badoni (1994) argues for the introduction of the term *clandestinity* in the psychoanalytic vocabulary. She refers to a clandestine statute of analysis, that is to say, when it is in a transition's moment or in an *impasse* but also in a possible necessary condition in which things are going to change. Badoni prefers the term *clandestinity* to *secrecy*. This is because she is interested in describing not the keeping hidden something from someone but rather the keeping hidden the fact of being associated to someone. This form of keeping hidden is peculiar of the change predicted by the analytic project. Clandestinity can be regarded as a method of reacting to the impact of otherness. According to this author one cannot summon the clandestine back to openness without having confronted the reasons that forced him to clandestinity.

Homer writes in *Odyssey* (book IX) that Ulysses and his fellows "in much distress ... came to the land of the lawless and inhuman Cyclopes." In specific, Polyphemus does not look like a human being in any way and does not follow the rules of hospitality. After having been entrapped and felt feelings rage, pain, and helplessness for the fact that Polyphemus has eaten his mates, Ulysses contemplates revenge. When the Cyclop asks what is his name, he responds in a smart and deceptive way: "My name is Noman; this is what my father and mother and my friends have always called me."

It is worth noting that the act of blinding Polyphemus is not only something necessary for Ulysses' release: it is also the right punishment for having disobeyed the most basic human principles. "The Cyclops gathered from all quarters round his cave when they heard him crying, and asked what was the matter with him. 'What ails you, Polyphemus,' said they, 'that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? Surely no man is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force? "But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, 'Noman is killing me by fraud! Noman is killing me by force!" (As we can see, Ulysses deceives Polyphemus through a pun) 'Then,' said they, 'if no man is attacking you, you must be ill."

Ulysses saves himself because he is able first to make his identity clandestine and then to recover it only when he sails the sea with his boat and thus is far from danger: "Cyclops, if any one asks you who it was that put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior Ulysses, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca". Only when he feels safe and does not fear to be killed, Ulysses can come out from clandestinity and reveal the true identity he had to hide to Polyphemus. "Only an identity able to tolerate changes and even temporary blackouts can deal with the violent cyclops living in its inner world" (Algini and Lugones, 1999, p. 11).

Examples of this situation can occur in the analyses of adolescent patients: only when the adolescent clearly feels he can trust his analyst and does not feel his identity at risk anymore, he can allow himself to make a revelation and thus to come out from clandestinity. However, this does not occur in the case of occasional paedophilia which I describe: in this case the continuous changes in the degrees of trust in the analyst become so agitated that they can lead the patient to interrupt the analytic relationship and not to come out from clandestinity. The analyst can certainly perceive the clandestine forms of expression of the childish world through his own countertransference. This means that these forms can appear into the analytic relationship but, because they rely only on the analyst's feelings, they cannot be interpreted to the patient. Nonetheless, they can become aspects of an analytic knowledge able to foster a different understanding.

"If we do not consider the clandestinity and its forms, we risk to fail or to not terminate our analyses. The premature disclosure of a clandestine association can force the patient to enter in a state of being hidden that can lead to interrupt the analytic relationship, to cause emotional-somatic reactions (this is because the body is the main place of this hiding), or to continue the analytic relationship as it were out of present time. In this case, the analyst's words appear to lose their transformative power and to become the end of patient's Self" (Badoni, 1994). I think that Badoni is right when she describes some of the main protective features typical of the clandestine attitude that a patient can take all along an analysis. However, in addition to the aspects she points out, I would like to describe some clandestine modalities of expression of the patient's internal world and of the analytic relationship that exemplify how secrecy can transform into something perverse. I will do it

by referring to a case of occasional pedophilia: I will define the peculiar ways of its development and I will distinguish them from those typical of the so-called *benign form of clandestinity*. My aim will not be to individuate a specific defence mechanism but rather to draw attention to the peculiar expressive quality that certain narcissistic splittings can show in some perverse cases.

In *Fetishism* (1927, p. 156) Freud writes that: "In very subtle instances both the disavowal and the affirmation of the castration have found their way into the construction of the fetish itself". Freud uses the term *disavowal* in a specific sense: it "(...) consists in the subject's refusing to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967, p. 117). "*Repression*, strictly speaking, is an operation whereby the subject attempts to repel, or to confine to the unconscious, representations (thoughts, images, memories) which are bound to an instinct" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967, p. 389).

In this sense Freud introduces the concept of the splitting of the Ego for explaining perversions and psychoses. He considers this concept in 1938 and distinguishes it from that of repression. The splitting of the Ego consists in a suspension of the interpretative chains that reduces the possibilities of the Ego to grow and become more complex. In other words, the splitting of the Ego can be a hindrance to the person's capacity to adapt him to the internal and external reality.

The abuser tends to appeal to defence mechanisms such as the denial and the splitting of the Ego. Both these mechanisms are strictly connected. How Freud says about the abuser "on the one hand, with the help of certain mechanisms he rejects reality and refuses to accept any prohibition; on the other hand, in the same breath he recognizes the danger of reality, takes over the fear of that danger as a pathological symptom and tries subsequently to divest himself of the fear" (1940 [1938], p. 275).

Simona Argentieri (2000, pp. 159-60) describes the bad faith as a condition very close to clandestinity, "the acting out of multiple functions of various systems of the patient's identity; it is relatively coherent at a closer range, but it is also absolutely incoherent and cannot be integrated at a more global range (...). No part of the external reality is massively deformed and no part of the internal reality is suppressed and driven back into the unconscious (...) Thanks to small splittings of the Ego, no ideal-emotional group is repressed: what is eliminated and suppressed actually are the associative links and ties between the different contexts."

Consequently, potentially contradictory aspects of the Self can live together and not be in conflict: the *honest* and the *dishonest* parts alternate on the conscious scene without determining the need to choose and without entailing painful feelings of guilt and shame.

In these cases, clandestinity seems to be a defensive mental organization resulting from an unconscious perverse use of secrecy. This situation occurs when the patient's communication goes from a polysemous, open and unstable condition to a stable condition of splitting. This condition can be likened to a sort of crypt or tomb in which the *cryptophorus* secretly incorporates a stranger in the Ego (Abraham, Torok; 1978)³. In such a situation the patient perfectly plays the role the analyst has proposed to him without any feeling of being false and without any awareness of his mimetic behaviour. This involves a specific difficulty of access whose traces we can find in the analytic relationship (Schinaia, 2001; De Masi 2007). That is to say, each word said, each concept expressed, each emotion experienced and communicated carries not also their own meaning but also an attempt to not communicate directly something hidden. It is a kind of clandestine passenger of the mind like Edgar Allan Poe's *Gordon Pym* or the Joseph Conrad's *Secret Sharer*. In the countertransference, this passenger gives the analyst the feeling of another presence that makes him feel that there is something inauthentic and strange but also expressively intense in the emotional-affective communication. In this sense the work of receiving-containing moments of infancy becomes more complex. Only a hard countertransferential assessment can allow dealing with the

³ In the foreword of the Italian edition of *L'Écorce et le Noyau* Lucio Russo (2009a, p. VI) writes: "The fundamental difference between *introjection* and *incorporation* is crucial to understand how the cryptic space within the Ego instantly gives itself up on the basis of a magical, anti-instinctive and defensive annexation of the object. The process of introjection occurs when the subject assimilates the driving object as lost, whereas that of incorporation when the subject cannot elaborate his mourning. (...) The incorporation locks the object up and strips it of its driving qualities. This process makes the object lost and separate and leads to guard against it clandestinely in a secret place of the Ego."

perverse features of the patient's childish needs and giving an account of the insurmountable duality of those countertransference feelings. In fact, in these feelings, we can feel both a threat and its opposite, uncertainty and certainty of the borders, confusion and recovery.

The case I here present shows how in different stages of the analysis some changes may occur between the different figures of psychic clandestinity.

A clinical case

«I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return»
(W. H. Auden, 1st September 1939)

X is a forty-five years old professional. He is handsome, tall and athletic. He is without any doubt well read, clever and very good at talking with others. He dresses in a sporty but elegant way. He is known as a man with an open mind and progressive ideas. He has an important career behind him and a radiant future in front of him. From his initial presentation he seems to lack absolutely nothing and to have all the luck.

He is the fourth child and his three sisters are much older than him. He describes his father, a minor building contractor, as an arrogant and coarse man with whom he has always had very little communication. His father always tended to belittle and offend him and shout at him loudly. His mother was a primary school teacher. She describes her as an educated and kind woman, very concerned about his education and cultivating high expectations for his future. She denigrated the father by highlighting through her actions and thoughts his negative aspects.

When the father was not able to reply to the mother's sharp arguments, he began to shout that the women ruled the roost and were turning his only son into a fool. The patient felt humiliated by these statements that distanced him further from his father, intensified the complicity with his mother and nourished his fantasy of replacing his father. On these occasions, in order to calm him, his mother stroked his thick hair in a clearly sensual manner. X remained silent for hours letting her stroke his hair, almost paralysed in pleasure. These sessions of stroking carried on for hours and took place in an exciting silence. However, they contrasted to the long periods in which X felt the mother distant, very taken up with her commitments as a teacher, too careful to her students, of whom he was intensely jealous. X had the feeling that his mother was excited too: however, the situation was all emotionally overcoming and mentally confusing because it could not even be mentioned. About similar cases Ciavaldini (2006) speaks of the excessive discontinuity in the relationship with the primary mother and Bouchet- Kervella (1996) of the deficit of primary paedophilia on the mother's part, postulated as necessary for the establishment of the narcissistic disposition in the child. Faced with a mother who is too absent or too exciting when she is present with him, the child finds himself in a situation of psychic impasse in which, in order to deal with discontinuity, he has to resort to an over excitation that he is not able to elaborate psychically. "Thus (...) those systems of excitement are installed and prepare the ground for the extension of a set of self-calming procedures of a particular kind. These procedures are the *scenery-acts* of the perverse or of the paedophile. Sometimes they can unfold in an almost twilight atmosphere of cancellation of consciousness" (Ciavaldini, 2006, p. 183).

He always had to excel to be worthy of his mother's idealization and he developed a sense of superiority towards his father who defined coarse, ignorant and superficial (but good in his job as a building contractor). The sisters sustained such a troublesome Oedipal situation by considering him as the only real male in the family and the apple of their mother's eye.⁴

⁴ The identification with the maternal phallus is shown by Andr e Bauduin (2007) as a paradigm of imposture. «The mother asks the boy to comply with her *phallic agenda* (according to the good expression of Michel de M'Uzan 1973):

X had been very successful at school and graduated with honours. He excelled in sports and was a Don Juan until he got married to a girl he met at university. She was a little younger than him, beautiful, rich and coming from an important family. In this “perfect” family picture the only problematic issue was his wife’s miscarriage in the third month of pregnancy. It followed that she had great difficulty in conceiving again. When the couple had already begun the process for an adoption, his wife became pregnant again. His son was born without any problems five years ago.

He described the marriage as extremely satisfying. X said that his wife was very much in love with him, that she adored him and that she felt sexually fulfilled. He said he was in love with his wife but above all he felt flattered by the fact that a beautiful woman from an upper class family could be attracted to him both physically and emotionally. X seemed to be one of those narcissistic men who try to neutralize their feelings of inadequacy, impotence and inferiority through a social role making them feel superior, special, admired and powerful. In their biographies their relations with the mother are disproportionately intense and not rarely eroticized and co-exist with painful deprivation of a strong father offering only belittlement. This type of relationship between a boy and his parents often leads to vulnerability and a type of narcissistic defence that involves unrealistic representations of himself and instability in self esteem underlying feelings of inferiority, deprivation and shame and the desire to achieve and maintain a sense of uniqueness and superiority. In the first consultation he told me at once in an emotionless voice that, a few days after the birth of his son, he was involved in *an unpleasant incident*. The *incident* consisted in the fact that the *touched* the seven years old daughter of his dearest friends and tried to force her to masturbate him. He said that everything happened without violence, in silence, with excitement and complicity.⁵ The friend and his daughter came to his house to visit on the occasion of the birth of X’s son and he had a chance of staying alone with the little girl. The girl told her father what happened. The father he did not denounce X to the judicial authorities but told the fact to X’s wife, her family and some mutual friends. In spite of his friend’s decision (that was based on a conspiracy of silence) X felt exposed to public scorn and reacted by raising the bet, like a consummate poker player. Although he referred to have never been sexually attracted to a little girl up until that moment, he wrote a letter to his friend. In it he presented himself as morally and intellectually upright and as the victim of what common people would call an *insane gesture* that went beyond the Pillars of Hercules of banality and conformity. In the letter he also pointed out the seductiveness of the little girl: he wrote that she had already provoked him on other occasions by sitting on his knees and rubbing herself against his penis. Her mischievous ingenuity had deeply upset and confused him. He was distressed by this situation because he had to ask excuse for having offended common moral and for not

he is asked in all respects to be an object that only exists in the mother’s imagination» (p. 13). This reflection is influenced by the the studies of Karl Abraham (1925) who emphasizes the centrality of the Oedipal issues, of the adaptation as a substitute for the transformation of the psychic and emotional functioning and of the establishment of a manic reaction to create a false identity that supports its own talent.

William R. D. Fairbairn (1952) argues that the impostor’s schizoid personality is characterised by deep splittings in the Ego. Helen Deutsch (1955) focuses on the importance of the establishment of the personality *as if* and of the use of an exalted ideal of the Ego. Phyllis Greenacre (1958a) states that the mother, by putting the boy in a position clearly superior to that of the father, can cause a strong imbalance of the oedipal situation. For sustaining his omnipotence the boy should make his small pre-genital penis pass for a genital penis, idealise it and skip over all the drive maturation. For Janine Chasseguet Smirgel (1975) the only penis that can be possessed without going through development that leads to the genitals is the anal penis. This is disguised and idealised so it can pass as a genital penis, or better, superior than a genital penis.

⁵ In *Crime and Punishment* (1866, p. 402), by referring to a Svidrigailoff’s dream, Dostoevskij admirably describes the projection of an adult’s desires into a little girl: “ ‘These purple lips seem burning’, thought Svidrigailoff. Suddenly he fancies he sees the long black lashes of the little sleeper gently move; beneath the half-closed eyelids there seemed a tendency to some cunning, sly, in no wise childish twinkle. Can the child be awake and only pretend to sleep? Yes, her lips smile – they quiver as with a desire to check a laugh. But now she throws aside constraint – she merrily laughs – there is, in that small face, a bold, brazen, luring look, without one trait of youth, for it is the face of a French harlot. Suddenly she opens both eyes wide – they gaze on Svidrigailoff with a lewd and amorous look – they ask, they smile. Nothing so repugnant as this childish face, whose youthful traits betoken lust. ‘What! at such an age?’ he cries, a prey to horror. ‘Can such things be?’ And now she turns on him her painted face with outstretched arms. ‘Accursed thing!’ exclaims Svidrigailoff with a cry of horror; he raises his hand to strike her, and at the same moment wakes”.

having complied the obligations of friendship and of hospitality⁶. He said also he had not been understood and that he had not received any reply by his friend. He stressed that what made feel worse was to be ostracized by the community to which he belonged. After a brief separation her wife took him back in spite of the advise of her family that, from that moment, did not want to see him again. All his attempts to be re-accepted into the family circle failed as well as his attempts of self-analysis to give an explanation to the *regrettable event*. He thought that only by trying to understand the causes of what happened with the help of an expert and showing his intention to be cured he could earn the readmission into the family circle. For this reason he contacted me. He proposed therefore a kind of research to understand in an intellectual way, while any personal need to be understood was considered at all. Betty Joseph (1983) emphasizes that, when the patient finds himself in this condition, he is not interested in understanding and uses the analysis for purposes other than that of understanding his problems. In these cases the patient becomes unable to continue the work of introjection and tends to free himself from the undesired psychic contents that he projects on to the analyst. Andrèe Bauduin (2007, p. 2) shows some *common* features between perverts and impostors, that is to say, “the attempt to find partners they could trick and idealize at the same time, with whom they wish to make an élite couple and to affirm their superiority. It is a matter of research for the *co-production*, that would be necessary to give body and reality to the megalomaniac fairy tale that perverts and imposters tell themselves.”

Madeleine Baranger (1959) says that it is difficult to assess how innocent or sincere the patient is. However, there is a precise countertransferecial feeling that he is attempting to deceive us and deceive him. It is a slight disguise that eludes what might reveal the contradiction and generate a sense of guilt. She emphasizes that these patients do not suffer the splitting but make use of it. They do not want to establish links or synthesize the introjected internal objects. “A multiplicity of contemporary and contradictory identifications that have not settled down makes the analysand feel and stand in for various characters without knowing who he really is” (p. 186-187). This determines an unstable composition that seems to operate as a defence from the persecutory anxieties as well as from the depressive ones.

These attitudes can be understood as an attempt to subvert the analytic space and to radically pervert the analytic situation by acting a procedure against awareness. This procedure disregards what the analyst says as it was not thought of by him. The evasive and evacuative way with which X revealed his secret to me (therefore a non secret)⁷, along with the untimely evasive and also evacuative manner of the letter sent to the father of the little girl, struck me even more than his initial paedophile reasoning having a defensive quality. I felt annoyed and disgusted by a communication that wanted to be intellectually seductive but that was actually cold, sly and violently insolent. This communication was totally disrespectful of the necessity to construct a suitable container to receive it over time.

Although I was still in doubt if starting or not an analysis with X and I was told of his emotional problems, the countertransferecial inconvenience and discomfort were an alert of the difficulties I was going to deal with. In the ancient maps, the inscription *hic sunt leones* (here be dragons) indicated the unknown or not sufficiently explored or mysterious regions of Africa and Asia. It is clear that this inscription designated a threat, the same threat I was feeling when I was thinking to enter in the mysterious internal world of X.

I had the feeling that the disclosure of the event made him feel resented for his relationship with an internal father with whom he did not intend to justify himself. (In fact, he did not want to be the poof predicted by his father: he had to continue being a real man, scornful with his superiority and his cultural arrogance, even when he had to grudgingly admit his collapse). There was also present an internal mother, silently, but intensely seductive that at the same time carried out clear masturbatory practices (stroking his hair) and denied the sensory excited experience through this

⁶ Georges Devereux (1953) reminds us how in the myth of Chysippus’s seduction by Laius, the moral values of paedophilia were not at stake (in the Greek culture paedophili was actually well accepted) but the conventional values and those of hospitality were brutally cancelled.

⁷ He described the the sexual contact with the little girl in details.

comforting camouflage. This provoked in her son a sort of cognitive blindness of his own perceptive capacity.

Unlike other paedophile patients he did not try to minimize the sexual contact with the little girl and the original aesthetic-cognitive exaltation (probably also related to homosexual anxieties: «he was not a poof») that had characterised the paedophile reasoning that had also been crammed in the letter to the father of the girl. He quickly gave way to an apparently strong self-criticism but this was devoid of any emotional involvement⁸. In a nice text on the *exceptions* (1916, p 312) Freud writes: “They say that they have renounced enough and suffered enough, and have a claim to be spared any further demands; they will submit no longer to any disagreeable necessity, for they are *exceptions* and, moreover, intend to remain so. In one such patient this claim was magnified into a conviction that a special providence watched over him, which would protect him from any painful sacrifices of the sort”. As we can see, Freud describes in an analysis the secret fantasy, in which the analysand occupies an exceptional position in the meeting with the analyst⁹. This fantasy has to remain secret: if it were made explicit, it would be clear that it is an illusion. In the clandestine condition, the secret fantasy of being an exception is replaced by an unassailable and narcissistic certainty that being exceptional is not subject to any doubt and is a reality to which the analyst has to submit. Paradoxically such a certainty can also present itself as the *apparent* submission to the will of the analyst, as happens to the child ready for any pseudo-giving up to maternal wishes even when he is considered special in comparison to his brothers. Behind the apparent commitment to analysis and to the acceptance of the authority of the analyst, the clandestine triumph of his own perverse convictions makes the behaviour of a paedophile an existential and intellectual experience of superiority in respect to the miserable conformism of mortals.

As I said, there was no attempt to minimize the sexual contact with the girl and, in spite of the crudeness of what he told me I noticed a subtle sensation of provocative exaggeration and childish exaltation of nonconformist infringement. If I had chosen to let me go, I would have commented with a *boom!* more or less as a reaction to when the children’s tall stories. So I asked him if he hadn’t also noticed some boastfulness in his justification. In response he said a *maybe* by using more a perplexed than doubtful tone.

I had the feeling that the act of paedophilia might have been a genuine manic *exploit*¹⁰, that is to say, the reactive result of having his feelings of exclusion following the birth of his son. In other words, X felt to be forced into a secluded and secondary position with regards to the couple mother-baby. X’s experience of exclusion and isolation took him back to the exclusions he had experienced as a child: he was excluded by his sisters who were much older than him and who made a group by themselves, by his mother’s students and by a father who left him in splendid and uncontaminated isolation and at the mercy of the seductive behaviour, the idealizing projections and the *phallic agenda* of the mother. The wife substituted the mother in a kind of adoring submission but, from the moment she had a child to take care of, she provoked a real crisis of identity in X. He felt brutally put aside and he projected this experience of brusque exclusion into the little daughter of his friend,

⁸ Donald Meltzer (1992) says that, when the configuration of a massive projective identification with the internal objects is active (usually at the level of partial objects like breast or penis) the quality of the adult’s co-operation in the psychoanalytic process is substituted by a pseudo-cooperation or «assistance» to the analyst. This acting out is manifested through a rather servile behaviour, like a desire of convincing, showing, being of help, or relieving the analyst of his burden. Every convincing feeling that the patient wished to make raise from the interpretation is missing, while it appears clear the desire to obtain praise, approval, admiration, or even the gratitude on behalf of the analyst.

⁹ Georg Simmel (1906, pp. 464-465) writes: “Secrecy gives the person enshrouded by it an exceptional position; it works as a stimulus of purely social derivation, which is in principle quite independent of its casual content, but is naturally heightened in the degree in which the exclusively possessed secret is significant and comprehensive”.

¹⁰ Franco De Masi (2007) argues that if the paedophile leads an apparently normal life and has sexual relations with other adults it is a problem of occasional paedophilia that must be kept distinct from the structured paedophilia. However, Marvin Glasser (1988) points out that even in occasional paedophilia (that he defines *pseudo-neurotic*), in which the sexual act seems to be stirred up in conditions of stress, one can discover the existence of a paedophile imaginary that works behind an appearance of normal sexuality. Charles W. Socarides (1959) thinks that the occasional paedophile tends to manifest more easily in the middle age or at the beginning of old age, when some important psychological changes alter the defences against sexual impulses.

who had also been put aside whilst the spotlights turned on to the newly born baby.

Of course, any strictly aetiological intention is far from my mind. As Francesco Barale (2001, p. 19) writes: «The psycho-dynamic understanding always seems to be more able to discern the vicissitudes of some fundamental undone human aspects than to outline a specific course (...). When it is possible, the construction-reconstruction of the internal events of personal individual stories usually leaves largely intact a feeling of mystery about why (...) persons have developed their own stories, precisely those developments and not many others possible».

Also the expressive method used in the meeting with me seemed to be a seductive reaction to the fear of exclusion-distance following the verbal explanation of his disturbance. According to this explanation, only those unable to go beyond the current ethics could not comprehend his act. In short, as in relation to his mother, he had to continue to be a kind of superman and he showed an aesthetic-sexual exaltation in order to avoid any contact with his difficulties, his limitations, his confusion and his sense of guilt.

After having pointed out his boastfulness and stemmed from what I felt to be an exaggerated apology, there was a lessening in X's obstinate defensive entrenchment which conflicted with my attempts to give voice to his childish experience of exclusion and isolation. From here the mood in our relationship began to change. X began to explain hastily his decision to write the letter, with its arrogant tone and its altogether indefensible position. With an apparent contrite expression and a respectful and deferential attitude he *confessed* that the girl certainly did not want to seduce him, at least not in the way an adult would. For this reason he had to repent for a despicable, abhorrent and unjustifiable act. Also this apparently strong self-criticism seemed inauthentic, hurried and characterized by a manic quality that made it awkwardly heroic. Although he was lying down on the couch he was able to speak in a heartfelt way and to shake his arm. He continuously pointed his finger as a preacher during a sermon. I felt that he was telling me that, if he could not have exalted his transgressive and eccentric love affairs, then he would have exalted his role of person full of regrets and thus he would have gone on a guilt trip. It was as I was watching a Giuseppe Verdi's gloomy opera in which the patient was able to play his role with good acting techniques but unable to convey any emotion. It was a revealed secret that actually did not reveal anything new and made me feel very puzzled. This puzzlement was useful for understanding how the feeling of deep void of X's Self.

As Badoni (1994) points out, "these patients cannot know anything about the others because they do not know anything about themselves. Their necessary and continuous shift from truth and vanity and vice versa does not find an adequate containment." His way of making him submitted by the objects in a parasitic way was an attempt to establish a sort of substitute of a true affinity with me. I felt a truly sadomasochistic atmosphere. His attempts to seduce me by behaving as a *good patient* (that is to say, an engaged and looked after patient) were actually attempts to manipulate me according to his aggression. Of course, he could not recognize and act this aggression and thus he projected it into me. Because of this projection I became a frightening figure he had to keep calm. Like a child he attempted to seduce me in every way in order to be heard from me and, at the same time, to be protected from my supposed lack of comprehension and my envious attacks to his skills (Meltzer, 1999). I listened to him in silence and, in spite of the many emotions I felt, I could understand that probably X did not feel judged by me in that moment. I was at the same time a figure over which he wanted to triumph and a figure he could highly regard, a figure he wanted to destroy and a figure he wanted to keep safe. His maniacal aspects were realized in a triumphant and excited state and in a state in which he damaged his objects at the same time. Lucio Russo (2009b, p. 157) argues that "the secondary identifications are unconscious and contribute to forming a composite identity. This identity implies the functioning of the primary and secondary processes by picking up on both levels different traits from different characters. As in the dream, these traits are united in a sort of conglomerate. The analytical work breaks up this conglomerate into single parts to provide the subject the awareness of the various masques that compose his real identity (and eventually transform them). The identity is therefore *all concentrated*, that is to say, made up of the juxtaposition of many different elements that must be broken up to be analysed."

My aim was to slowly try to help to break apart this confused mixture by underlining those features that mostly need to be recognized and by separating them from the most perverse features. Of course, I had to deal with all these things first inside of me, that is to say, in my countertransference: I had to extricate myself in my intimate mixture of confused and conflicting feelings. As Donald Campbell (2008; 2010) pointed out, the reconstruction and the feelings about what had really happened and what concerns the phantasies in the traumatic experience of a paedophile are based mainly on the transference and the countertransference.

Over three sessions I pointed out to X my perception of inauthenticity in his self-criticism and of his difficulty to get in touch with his conflicts because the excited aspects of him and its suffering aspects were confused. After an initial perplexed silence and his successive attempt of justification, it appeared an apparently more welcoming attitude towards my interventions. I could be seen as a prelude of probably more painful but more emotionally authentic acknowledgements.

Several times I noticed his tendency to promote a sort of sudden change of scene. Like at the traditional theatre, in the X's sessions we went from the preparation of one scene to the next one without any gradualness or mediation. In a session X went back and described with subtle pleasure the perverse polymorphous sexuality of children, including that of his little son, and their tendency to act without the inhibitions of adults, then he passed to describe the candid seven years old girl first playing and then ignobly abused by him and finally he talked of the representation of the Gothic figure of a kind of priestess of sex in miniature able to seduce him with malicious ingenuity. There was not enough time for forming and constructing a new character able to substitute the previous one. The manic lack of time for this transition was quite relevant to his life. From the sudden abjuration from his family of origin, he went on without passing through mourning and consequently without any attempt of elaboration to the uncritical exaltation of the family gained through the marriage and the social status gained from it. From being a solicitous and responsible father, as a new Fregoli, he became both a passionate paedophile lover and a victim of the marvellous childish seduction. Terms such as revolution, earthquake, fracture or caesura, are central in his communications. In these communications neither the continuity nor the possibility of constructing a framework able to guarantee a single plot in his existence were foreseen. He lacked this framework in which the gaps could be confronted through authentic mourning and not filled up manically with rationalizing, vicarious or palingenetic constructions.

X would probably have liked to establish immediate and perfect links between the different phases of his life, between the different time-space lived experiences. Because he was not able to do this, he could not take into account the impossibility of an enormous task. He was not able to find short cuts, ask for discounts, find mediations, accept dependency: he could only begin again from zero, cancel the past very time, exalt the future and so fall prey to reflective blindness and to his impossibility to elaborate. There was no real future and, as a consequence, there was no past: time was frozen in a rigid identification made once and for all with regards to an abstraction. The denial of the differences between generations expresses itself in all dimensions of the interruption of development and of the psychic death that this implies (Baudin, 2007).

What was described as a Sisyphus's fatigue represented the impossibility to renounce to the omnipotent and immediate control of his steps and on the obliged stops of his existential path. It was impossible to him to stop and elaborate the fatigue of waiting, the pain of imperfection, the childish limits and the mourning of omnipotence. So he had to start on new inebriating waltz in which he could put all his passion and his obliviousness.

"In the Gospel – X said – Luke states that whoever offends the children and jeopardizes their life, should put a stone around his neck and throw himself into the sea"¹¹. It is a question of a serious crime and a serious guilt."

Despite the dramatic reference to the Gospel, I did not feel compassion when I listened to him under the burden of guilt. Rather, I felt an aesthetic and excited mode of describing the guilt, where

¹¹ He precisely invoked the Gospel of Matthew (18, 1-7): "If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea".

a clandestine part of his Self had transformed the triumph of the seduction into a triumph of expiation, the figure of an anti-conformist and passionate man into a beast who had committed the most abominable, the most ignoble of acts against nature. Leon Grinberg (1971) would talk of persecuting guilt and not of depressive guilt. Behind the revealed secrets the praise of secrecy appeared: the unconscious protection of the hiding place for the most hidden emotions (a sort of *sancta sanctorum*) and the narcissistic exaltation defended the inaccessibility to an analyst who was looking somewhere for shreds of authenticity. These shreds could help him to maintain those relational bridges that could not be disconnected from the falsification of affections put on show the patient showed in the sessions. On the other hand X was used to the secret, to cover up the seductive experience of the stroking of the hair by his mother with a blanket of confused and blinding silence.

Paul Claude Racamier (1995) recommends to not attack the secrets directly when these are kept so jealously but to use two types of interpretive resources. The first is «of interpreting (the secret) as *the everlasting illusion*, that is to say, an enormous and repairing illusion whose splendour itself aims to blur the stain that the secret material takes with it: the undigested shame, the mourning never done, the rip open by the breaking of thread from the origins. Another theme for interpretation: *the prohibition of knowing and of saying*. If we certainly must not force people to know and to say, on the other hand we must show them that they are afraid of it because *it is prohibited*» (pp. 159-160).

However, I believe that, before any relatively useless interpretation of the content, the analyst should consider the tiring work of forced cohabitation with the clandestinity in the patient's mind. That is to say, he must deal with that clandestine peculiarity or expressive aspect of his narcissism that communicates inauthenticity even when the patients report true facts. In other words, he has to "follow his task at the mercy of the *taches aveugles*, the *blind spots*"¹² in which he will think, speak or act in projective identification with those internal objects of the patient that are projected into the analytic field" (Guignard, 2006, p 318).

An untimely call back to transparency through an *interpretation bouchon*, a stopper interpretation (Guignard, 2002), could confirm and reinforce the patient's necessity of being entrenched in the secret retreat. Marta Badoni (1994) says that, if the association is secret, the individuals move more freely since they are freed from the guilt, that otherwise is declared and pursued in hiding.

John Steiner (1993, p. 1) goes beyond Racamier in identifying *the psychic retreat* as "a powerful system of defences that serves as protective armour or hiding place." So, he stresses how the analyst's interpretations can be experienced as dangerous intrusions in so far as they threaten the impossibility to dispute the retreat and expose the patient to intense persecution anxiety. Steiner emphasizes that the patient could experience the insight as disturbing that situation of containment able to foster his contact.

In the early stages of X's analysis I only used some of my feelings related to his

¹² Freud dealt with this issue in 1912. By mentioning Wilhem Stekel he affirmed that the removals of the analyst determine *blind spots* in his perception. Joseph Sandler (1976) and Herbert Rosenfeld (1978) resumed Freud's reflection when they described the way in which the blind spots of the analyst nourish the tendency to undertake in a collusive acting out. In turn, Florence Guignard (2002, 2006) describes the blind spots (the *taches aveugles*) when, at the point of junction of transference-countertransference, the patient-analyst communication during their relationship break down of communication and results in an absence of representation. These are the results of an (unconscious or preconscious) experience of loss of a significant internal object and they do not only concern the patient. "The blind spot can be defined as an unconscious answer of the transference of the patient in the *hic et nunc* (here and now) of the session. It gives itself up to the countertransference of the analyst every time it finds itself in projective identification with one of the internal objects of the patient or sometimes also with a split and denied part of his Self» (Guignard, 2002, p. 1654). One of the forms of compromise that the analyst reaches in relation to anxiety is strictly tied to the empty representation that sustains the blind spot. A way in which the analyst behaves in this situation is to try to fill that emptiness (that can pertain both to himself and to the patient) is through an *interpretation bouchon* (an interpretation stopper). The interpretation stopper often works as a *prête-à-porter* pseudo-association: it is a static image that the analyst has previously made with regards to the analysing material brought to him before and not as the result of an authentic learning of it.

communications. I avoided interpretations that could enhance the feeling of sadistic intellectual superiority. These interpretations could lead the patient to feel me as a depreciated father and nourish that superman-type behaviour so fragilely recognised. Subsequently it was possible to begin to interpret also his perverse mode in relation to his objects.

In a dream told during the second year of analysis X describes his participation to a religious procession of hooded people in a southern Italian town during Easter Week. During the procession, before many spectators, he and others whipped themselves and asked pardon from the Virgin Mary. The flagellation of the body did not cause pain in him but rather a subtle enjoyment shared with the other hooded people. The dream was described as suggestive in its colours and in the beautiful scenery of the procession. X associated the dream to the pleasant feeling of not being alone to ask for the remission of his sins to Our Lady and of being with other hooded people. Finally he said he was astonished by the content of a dream that was clearly in contrast with his recognised and advocated atheism.

The hood allowed keeping the real identity secret even in front of a crowd. The act of self-whipping was performed and, in this performance, it transformed into a perverse mode of masochistic enjoyment. The ritualization of the procession removed any meaning of authentic individual expiation: it indicated the triumph of a vivid scene able to make the acts grand and collectively theatrical, thus freed from all guilt. Finally, belonging to the group of hooded people strengthened and turned the procession¹³ into a shared perverse game. The vividness of this dream provoked an internal shock in his rational construction, represented by his advocated atheism. The invasion of the most emotional aspects emphasized the need to declare through a clandestine mode of thought and his need of the analytic relationship. This relationship was not only useful in terms of giving him the opportunity of expressing a perverse pleasure, but also certain affects and emotion otherwise not conveyable.

I was deeply struck by this dream, because I was born in a town in Apulia, a region of southern Italy, where the Procession of Mysteries takes place on Good Friday. It involves a long line of hooded people (the pardons) baring footed in a very slow cadenced rhythm and carrying on procession heavy statues that represent the tormented Christ Carrying the Cross all night long. I remembered when I was a child and I followed on the Friday of the Holy Week the procession of the Mysteries with astonished awe, but also with intense apprehension. I remembered also that I was reassured by my father's big hand that held mine tightly in his one. I believe that these sweet and unforgettable childhood memories could have lowered the investigative-accusative tone that my interpretation could have had. By thinking on the patient rationalizing and super-ego intention, I may have favoured an easier welcoming of the interpretation by the patient.¹⁴

In the same session X talked to me about his simultaneous activities, the writing of an article about science for a magazine that he described as superficial and popular. He improperly defined himself as *ghost writer* in so far as this term indicates a person writing texts for others without his name appearing. Actually, he wrote these articles under a pseudonym so he could not damage the reliability of his public image and feel a secret satisfaction in the enjoyment of the freedom that wouldn't have allowed by using his real name. Janine Chasseguet Smirgel (1985) comments on a 1955 article by Helene Deutch on the imposture. She deals with those famous impostors that, even being able to attain prestige using their real name, choose to use another one, that of men they wish to be like. This shows that the name allows establishing filiation and that for these patients changing the real name is like a refusal to recognise their real origins or their real father.

The association took us back to the contents of the dream interpretation. This interpretation was able to express the simple and common childish aspects only through the transgression acted by the

¹³ At the ethnological level, the procession represents the sufferance and the torment of expiation,

¹⁴ Carlos Fishman (2004) describes a case of occasional paedophilia in which the patient, who had been condemned for having abused a boy, was often attracted by boys and had constantly had erotic fantasies about and also during the sexual relations with his wife (from whom he had recently divorced). During these relations he felt the one who is caressing the boy as much as the boy who is being caressed. The possibility of connecting these fantasies to the impossibility in his childish story of receiving a protective and caressing response from the mother had made him depressed and had interrupted his paedophile fantasies.

secret ghost of his hooded identity and the anonymity allowed by clandestinity. The strength of belonging to a clandestine association allowed him on one hand concealing his identity and on the other to perversely exhibit it, without hesitation or restraints. In this game of secret cross-references I had sometimes the feeling of being hooded, of losing myself and of being confused. I interpreted that he wanted that I was able to feel his childish needs only through clandestine transgression because otherwise he would be the belittled poof predicted by the father or the object of the silent game of masturbation of the mother. I made him participate in these feelings of mine.

X answered by concerning that the entrance door of the elevator of the building where my consulting room is located opened when the lift was not on the floor. Therefore it was a dangerous situation. I checked the elevator door and I excluded a real danger, but I felt my behaviour as a countertransference enactment. In this way it was possible to report to him his strong feelings of mortal threat coming from the analysis.

The pointing out of a serious danger (death by precipitation) seemed to indicate the terror linked to going through the elevator door that does not open into an inside container of the elevator, but directly and dramatically into a distressing and lethal emptiness.

The dream, the associations and the subsequent indication of danger provoked in my countertransference¹⁵ a series of feelings connected one to each other. The masochistic pleasure was both excited by the expiatory performance and protected by his membership to a secret association that ritualised it. Such a pleasure was rendered acceptable and presentable to the analyst-audience in a dangerous manner: that is to say, the way in which it was presented could have led the analyst to be collusively fascinated¹⁶. However, I felt the very intense and strong identification of danger when I checked if the elevator was functioning or not. That open door on the abyss without finding the mother's welcome or the father's protection was the sign that penetrating the clandestine folds of his internal world could have been for him (but for me too) a fatal danger.

In the following session X had a feeble memory of when as a child he played blind man's buff with his sisters and of the pleasure he felt of being jolted violently by them. Then he confessed to have entered (very occasionally) with a *nickname* a website dedicated to child pornography and to have been disturbed and disconcerted but not attracted.

He was confessing to me both his masochistic pleasure of being jolted violently, whilst blindfolded and afraid, and his membership to a clandestine organization of internet paedophiles, even if only out of curiosity and for a very brief period. That indefinable feeling of clandestinity that hovered over our meetings was confirmed by the memory of his childish experience and by the confession of having entered into a website of child pornography. Playing blind man's buff with the older sisters giving up his visible and acoustic control could be configured as a traumatic experience that the game ritualized and weakened. Thus, X had transformed this traumatic experience into a pleasant one through a kind of excited childish eroticism caused by the jolts. This old and confused mode of perverse transformation from a traumatic experience could be related to the control of the exclusion anxiety through the paedophilic acting out and the projective identification with the girl put into a secondary position at the moment of his son's birth. I connected this memory to the dream of the hooded people and the sadomasochistic pleasure of the self-whipping as well as his excited and shared performance. Browsing into a child pornography's website could have represented an attempt to elude his unconscious guilt through the clandestine sharing. The cracks in his clandestine world removed the space of inauthenticity, coldness and omnipotent control and left a glimpse of the confusion, the drama, the fear and the anxiety of death.

Through this partial but significant contact, X began the first phase of his elaboration of mourning in which the experience of loss still implied possession of the objects. In fact, with the

¹⁵ I want to stress that in it I felt one of my first excited and then affectionate insights.

¹⁶ Phyllis Greenacre (1958b, p. 524) writes: "The measure of the immediate response of the public to the impostored performance completes the spurious gauge of reality". The impostor's relationship to his audience mirrors his childhood relationship to his parents in many ways. The audience confirms the impostor's falsifications and becomes accomplice, so that it can be a suitable counterpart as his parents who permitted him to serve pathological defence mechanisms (Finkelstein, 1974).

continuation of analysis and after the confession of his clandestine raids on the web, he felt more uncovered and stripped. Immediately after having lowered his defence that allowed him to remember and feel pain, he began to be verbally aggressive towards me. He projected anger and irritation on me and in a paranoid way defined me as a conformist and a sadistic worker of a conformist society. In these moments it was difficult to tolerate these attacks nourished by a mental excitement aimed to avoid our relationship. I felt jolted and blinded just as happened to him when he was jolted by the sisters or belittled by the father and confused by the seductive mother. I felt how difficult it was to avoid reacting aggressively against this and containing the complex and turbulent coming out from clandestinity and the depressive entrance into the more responsible (perhaps more laboriously painful) world of the adult transparency. I therefore talked about this situation with some of my trusted colleagues who helped me endure this phase of the patient's violent attacks that paradoxically coexisted with some sketches of insight. In the attempt to understand the mental condition of the patient it is a question of simultaneously assuming a firm position able to contrast the arrogance with which the patient's Self dealt with the others (including the analyst) and emphasizing the good dependence on a human object.

Simona Argentieri Bondi (2000) underlines the risk for the analyst to implicitly express his criticisms and moral judgements and thus to be experience as a kind of external accusing Super-Ego by the patient. Persistent and hurried attempts to make the patient recognise the latent conflict may cause severe confusion. Of course, the other risk is that of remaining in silence, in a state of collusion that leads to freeze the analytic process in time.

Donald Winnicott (1971) supports the need that in the analytic setting the patient could have at disposal a private area in the presence of the therapist, but also emphasizes the necessity of knowing how to distinguish a pathological withdrawal. I felt exactly in these limits: I had to navigate between the Scylla of the risk of being too intrusive and of not respecting the autonomous work of the patient and the Charybdis of the irresponsibility, of the *laissez faire*, of an analysis that does not face the fundamental conflicts of the patient. The return to these aspects in meetings with the colleagues helped me realize that, in any case, I would have had to deal with the inescapable clandestinity of the patient both in terms of communication of a deep anxiety and in terms of perverse non-communication. It involved constructing a possible container able both to not frighten him and to keep him in the mayhem. As Meltzer (1999) shows, the aim was to show him the acting out of the childish part in a state of projective identification with the internal figures as contaminating elements of his adult life.

A few months after the report of the dream of the procession of the hooded people, he reported another dream in which he was on the escalator of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. He did not care of the crowd and he was reading the novel *Le Diable au Corps* (The Devil in the Flesh)¹⁷ (1923) by Raymond Radiguet. This novel describes a clandestine love affaire between a young married woman and an adolescent. The woman gets pregnant when the husband - a soldier - is away at war. The escalators are encased in a transparent structure that allowed a Japanese tourist to take pictures of him while reading a page of the book. X said he felt intruded and violated in a so intimate and innocent moment.

There are different aspects of this dream that allowed me thinking of a rich polysemy of the proposed images. While the projected aspects were still very evident in this inverted story of the intimate relationship of a married woman with an adolescent, the transparent structure in which the escalator is encased allowed one seeing and taking pictures of the embodied devil, that is to say, the son of a prohibited clandestine relationship. Things stated to be transparent so that one could see in the body even if the price of transparency involved the paranoid fear of being identified and uncovered by a photograph peeking at him. The dream highlighted also some accessibility to the withdrawal that until that moment had been rigorously clandestine. The persecutory feelings became significant with regards to an analyst able to see the devil in X's body and to penetrate into

¹⁷ For Marta Badoni (1991) the *devil in the flesh* would represent an experience of originary *trouble* (turbid, agitation, confusion and symptom), whose features are violence, unknowability ("What on earth is this?") and difficulty of assimilation.

his world and into him. The analyst was like the Japanese tourist taking pictures of him.

The continuous shift between the different figures of clandestinity showed evolving changes and movements. I think this was due more because of my holding function than because of my containing function. My continuous shifts mirrored those of the patient. They were situated in between too fast interpretations potentially able to make the patient a fugitive (Badoni, 1994) and the non-collusive tolerance able to create the conditions for turning the rigid aspects of withdrawal into mobile and communicable ones.

Freud (1937, p. 228) agrees with the sense of a sentence by Johann Nestroy, a shrewd satirist of old Austria: "Every step forward is only half as big as it looks at first." "It is tempting to attribute a quite general validity to the malicious dictum. (...) There are nearly always residual phenomena, a partial hanging – back portions of the earlier organization always persist alongside of the more recent one". He further states: "The transformation is achieved, but often only partially: portions of the old mechanisms remain untouched by the work of analysis." In short, "What has once come to life clings tenaciously to its existence" (1937, p. 229).

The last quotation from Freud emphasized how the imminent risk of interruption is always present in the analysis, in particular when the analyst deals with narcissistic patients. When the analytic work manages to create an inroad into the narcissistic defensive structure, the appearance of a dependant part capable of receiving help can be felt as too threatening. However, even after sessions in which the contact with this dependent part has occurred, negative therapeutic reactions can take place. An example can be the counterattack of the omnipotent and narcissistic part that has felt ousted from its position of supremacy and that, in this way, tries to regain the control of the Ego (Rosenfeld, 1968, 1987).

I would like to conclude by stating that this phase represented a stage of the analysis that began to be fruitful. However, perhaps because of the persecutory feeling of being discovered (which he experienced as violated), at the beginning of the third year X informed me that he had to interrupt the analysis because he had been offered a new university position in another city. Certainly, at the level of spatial and temporal reality, this was an important step in his career that clearly conflicted with the continuation of his analysis. However, I felt the importance of the defensive moves of the patient's narcissistic and anti-libidinous nature as well as the difficult coexistence in me of feelings of strong discomfort and disgust, along with the therapeutic attention and the emotional availability. After having been informed of his decision, I realized that I had contrasting feelings that had been present in me from the beginning of analysis, sometimes even simultaneously. I continually tried to take these contrasting feelings into account before, during and after interpretations, appreciating the disastrous childish aspects and trying not to ignore the destructive, perverse and manipulative aspects intrinsic in X's communications. Further, if I think back on X's analysis, while I acknowledge my attempts of expulsion in certain phases, I do not think to have colluded with his narcissistic and omnipotent moments that had led to deny the dependence and the risk of interruption. I was aware from the beginning my feelings of repulsion towards his harmful behaviour towards the little girl, but I was also aware that the analysis could have helped X.

I experienced that feeling of the inevitability of the conclusion that Donald Campbell (2008, p. 1039) describes as experienced «with perpetrators of sexual abuse on children, once they have recognised the betrayal and the pain of the abuse which they themselves have suffered, and go from the image of themselves as children 'friendly' to that of deceivers and of people who inflict pain on others». I tried to strongly sustain also the reasons for the analysis by noticing the aspects involved in the defensive request for interruption. Faced with disappointment, bitterness and the absolute unwillingness to continue on X's part, I had to objectively take into account the beneficial offer of work in another city. Thus, I agreed with him on a period of four months before interrupting the analysis and for a general assessment of the analytic procedure carried out. I advised him to begin a new analysis and to make myself available to suggest some analysts that I considered appropriate for his needs. During these months, contrary to my initial feelings, X had shown continuous shifts in his defensive moves but also feelings of satisfaction and of relative wellbeing and authentic gratitude.

I agree with Irene Ruggiero (2004, p. 667) on the opportunity of defining these incomplete rather interrupted analyses: “It may (...) happen that the analyst and the patient, even after a good job, must stop in front of an emotional situation that they are not able to manage in that specific phase of the patient’s life or within that of the couple patient-analyst. This stop does not necessarily preclude a successive resuming of the analysis, perhaps with some elements of the situation changed and new possibilities for development came out”.

I believe that one can talk about incomplete analysis when the feelings of the analyst are more marked by disappointment because of an experience of partiality of the work done than because of an experience of stalemate, failure or anger. In fact neither I felt the need to expel from my mind the frustrating experience nor the wish to go at all costs in search of a fully coherent explanation that, in the end, would prove to be false. The disappointment of a potentially fruitful work had not given way to a feeling of defeat, but coexisted with the feeling that the patient would have begun to bring in himself some depressively health aspects and sketches of insight.

In the last session, sunken into a list of good intentions that X aired for the future, I noticed in him a passionate nostalgia¹⁸ of the first phase of the analysis. In this phase he felt protected by clandestinity and he may have thought to involve me in his perverse show (“What a nice chat that we had together and how many ideological disagreements!” he says with a gesture of satisfaction), I think he also felt the difficulty to withstand his feelings (they were too warm to bear for a long time) to deal with an internal territory always bristling with obstacles, but now more accessible and open to be explored. One year later, X wrote me in a letter about his academic successes, the growth of his little son, the rediscovered harmony in his relationship with his wife and the new intense and rewarding social relations and his decision to begin a new analysis in the city in which he transferred after the end of our meetings. On the one hand the exit from clandestinity provoked in him the fear that the game of half-light, that up until then had protected him, could be thrown away due to the effect of the light of awareness and truth, leaving him without resources. On the other, it represented the road to access to the possibility of a new emotional awareness and of recognising the dependence that (even if spoiled from time to time by powerful drives to subordination or to maniacal escape) had brought him to the decision of beginning a new analytic experience.

Concluding remarks

In this paper I have tried to underline the peculiarity of the clandestine features we can find both in the patient’s internal world and in the analytic relationship. I have tried to reach this goal by describing and discussing the vicissitudes of transference and countertransference of the analyst-analysand couple. The paedophile patient¹⁹ has certainly shown a reduced representative skill but has nonetheless preserved part of it. Basically he has used two defensive modalities whose quality can be said *clandestine*: first, an introverted and narcissistic modality indicating a rigid splitting from the other emotional-communicative expressions and, second, an extroverted and libidinal modality indicating the possibility of a transformation and a relational openness.

The way in which he has shown me his internal world at the beginning of the analysis²⁰ was hypomanically clandestine. In fact, I had clearly felt that the patient did not feel guilty in spite of his penitent words. His acceptance of the analyst’s authority seemed to hide his perverse certainty that

¹⁸ André Ciavaldini ascribes to the primary depression of the paedophile the development of a transference of a passionate kind. This transference does not only surprise but can profoundly disturb the therapist. The therapist’s dismay has to do with that of the paedophile «unable to satisfy the requests of a mother who too early demand from him a great autonomy. Behind these claims, it is important to understand that there is hidden another request, much more archaic, that of taking care of the patient, and exclusively of him. (...) In this way the patient can repair the great precociousness of the deficiencies with which he was confronted at the time and become able to develop a primary depression.» (Ciavaldini, 2006, pp. 191-192)

¹⁹ Glasser would have classified him as *pseudoneurotic paedophile*.

²⁰ That is to say, when he expressed that sort of *manifesto-confession* in which he seemed to clearly assume his responsibility for his abuse.

the paedophile experience was not a violent behaviour or a form of oppression but rather the eccentric and dynamic way of expression of a man able to go beyond the *ordinary* social conventions. This expressive modality seemed to echo the clandestine modality through which he could show himself subjugated and subordinate to his father's authority (and thus acting as a fop without his own personality) and, at the same time, he could hide his erotic and masturbatory fantasies about his mother's petting. These fantasies excluded the father's authority and boosted further Oedipal fantasies of substitution. However, his shameless hypomania also assumed inside of me the features of the childish exaggeration, that is to say, he played the role of the cocky little child who exaggerates in order to hide his insecurity about the pathogenic communications of his family. I could feel the possibility to be in contact with a scared and devastated children's world only by considering all these strongly conflicting emotions and feelings.

The dream of the procession featuring hooded figures he reported in the second year of his analysis highlighted the countertransference co-existence of contrasting feelings. If a hood allows keeping secret an identity even in a crowd and indicates the clandestine features of his thoughts, of his exhibitionist fantasies and also of the analytic relationship, the religious ritualism of the procession contrasts with the rationalism of his declared atheism and permits to represent emotions and affects inexpressible in other ways. This dream reminded me a private childish memory in which I was attending to the gloomy procession featuring hooded figures in my hometown during the Good Friday holiday. I remembered that, during this procession, my father's big hand was protecting me by holding my little hand. This memory allowed me describing to the patient his mental processes, his underlying conflicts, his seductions, the predominance of his perverse personality over the healthy one. In fact, the healthy personality was not absent at all and seemed able to promise some possibilities of reworking and change. Thus, it was possible to feel and report his childish needs that the patient would have rediscovered and represented only through the clandestine transgression. Otherwise, he would have been the underestimated fop as his father depicted him or the silent and sensual object of masturbation of his mother.

Eugenio Gaddini (1981) distinguished an acting out that tends to erase the analytic process from an acting out that tends to work in function of the process. The latter acting out is more muffled and less evident than the former. "Participation in psychoanalytic work can only take place in secret, in a sort of clandestinity. (...) The messages which the patient's ego sends resemble those which the shipwrecked person throws into the sea closed in a bottle. (...) Acting out can be used in a case like this, like a container which doesn't give rise to suspicion, thanks to which the secret message can find its way to the outer world, evading censorship" (p. 59).

The dream of the Beaubourg's escalators²¹ shows the patient's tendency to psychotic withdrawal that, until that moment, he was able to keep clandestine. When things started to begin to be clear and transparent, the patient's perverted fantasies and the persecutory feelings towards the analyst became manifest. That is to say, when the analyst was allowed seeing the devil in the patient's flesh, he was experienced as someone who wanted to enter into his world and in himself²². After a session in which there had been a contact with that dependent part that had been able to come to light in the narcissistic structure, there had been a negative therapeutic reaction, I mean, a counterattack of the omnipotent and narcissistic part that had felt his supremacy threatened.

As an analyst I had been often involved in the patient's fantasies and dreams. In this sense I had to represent through transference the parental figures of his past and the confusion they were able to bring and his underestimated internal objects. However, I had to represent also a new figure able to support the development of the healthy part of his personality, that is to say, that childish part in need of care. The analytic process had to stop due to the patient's limitations and also of the analytic couple's limitations in that moment. Nonetheless, I think that patient had some benefits from the analysis. I believe these benefits could be useful if the patients will start a new analysis: in

²¹ As I have described above, these elevators are encased in a transparent plexiglass structure through which a Japanese tourist peeks at him reading *The Devil in the Flesh*.

²² In this sense, the analyst became as the Japanese tourist peeking at and taking pictures of the most hidden aspects of his personality.

it the patient could take advantage of the knowledge and the interactions of the analytic experience we had to stop. I believe also that I could do the same too, I mean, I think I have learnt a lot from this difficult and hard experience.

In conclusion, I think that the description of the analysis of X highlights not only the relational problems with this kind of patients but also the therapeutic possibilities of psychoanalysis in relation to the increasing number of cases of occasional paedophilia.

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