

FIRST IAGP INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON RESEARCH AND GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY AND PROCESSES ON CHRONIC STRESS - ATHENS, 20-23 NOV. 2014

SEXUAL SEDUCTION AND INCESTUAL MENTALITY VICTIMS GROUP TREATMENT

A clinical qualitative research in the National Health Service in Milan, Italy

Giovanna Cantarella

Giovanna Cantarella is a group analyst and psychoanalyst in private practice and in the National Health Service in Milan (Italy).

Full Member IPA (International Psychoanalytical Association) and SPI (Società Psicoanalitica Italiana)

Faculty Member and Group Supervisor APG (COIRAG)

Group Supervisor (2001-2013) in the Psychiatric Psychotherapy Unit under the direction of the Milan University, in Milan Niguarda Cà Granda National Health Service.

IAGP boardmember

AGPA fellow

GASI member

Since 1976 mixed gender therapeutic groups conductor.

Since 1982 women's therapeutic groups conductor.

The groups are psychoanalytically oriented, open-ended, long-term, up to 8 people, meet once weekly for sessions lasting 90 minutes.

The research process in treating incestual mentality victims started in 2009

1. The Research theme was focused in 2009 within the ongoing weekly group supervision process involving all Unit group therapists under my conduction.
2. Since 2011 the research was continued in my private practice groups after the economic restrictions due to the Italian government cut of the expenses in the National Health Service System.
3. The focus on the theme was originated through questioning and collectively reflecting in the supervision group on some women patients' "unusual" anxiety symptoms and behaviours.
4. These patients were all unusually attached to the family of origin and suffered from anxiety attacks when their work needed them to move from home. Unusual behaviour in the working climate of the industrial northern city of Milan, with all employed women population.

5. Therapists reflection in the supervision group focused on the unusual role played by these patients in their therapeutic groups. Roles whose unusual “mysterious” sense needed further investigations.

Out of:

- Supervision group long investigation and reflection (through group resonance, free associations, dreams, phantasies, fancying and imagining, transference countertransference feelings)
- the fundamental help of P.C. Racamier theorization
- it was hypnotised women patients were suffering from unconscious introjections of past family mentality, “incestual mentality”.

It was possible to formulate the research hypothesis:

Psychoanalytically oriented therapeutic groups are the setting of choice for treating unconscious incestual mentality introjections.

Due to the specific competence of psychoanalysis in investigating unconscious vertical and horizontal transferences.

P.C. Racamier theorization: the incest taboo

In the theorizing developed along the timespan of his scientific life, P.C. Racamier defines incestual the families in which:

- The incest taboo is established
- Incest is prohibited, not acted
- Some boundaries between culturally permitted and culturally prohibited acts are established
- However many often sexually promiscuous practices are accepted

P.C. Racamier theorization: Incestual culture in families

In “The incest and the incestual” (1995) P.C. Racamier defined incestual the family culture where:

1. The prohibition of incest was established but the psychological work for distinguishing affective attachment, from new rising sexual drives (directed to the same family figures) was not performed.
2. Boundaries between tenderness and sexual attractions were not differentiated. So that the family affective life was pervaded by sexual fantasies, by confusion, disorientation, ambiguity.
3. Sons and daughters continue to act as in infancy (they used to sleep together, to go around naked, etc.). Entering adolescence they are not helped to differentiate sexual attractions from affective attachments.
4. Fathers and mothers do not established and respect boundaries and rules (as an example fathers asking daughters to massage his body).

Family Roles are not fixed but can be interchangeable

P.C. Racamier theorization: The family “sexualisation” of affects

It circulates in the family a kind of “sexualisation” of affects, of confusion lasting far beyond early childhood, beyond adolescence through adulthood.

Gestures of tenderness intermingle with caresses full of sexual phantasies.

Even in adulthood kissing, touching, caressing and consequent sexual excitement are felt normal between parents and children, brothers and sisters.

P.C. Racamier theorization: the secret

The incest taboo does not allow sexual promiscuous practices to become incest.

Yet phantasies about incest in the family mind unconsciously circulate.

And it is a well kept family secret.

A secret deposited mainly in one of the family members collusively designed as incestual family victim.

P.C. Racamier theorization: the “guilty” family collusion

The family colludes in a silent pact: the family will forever grant emotional and sexual gratification within the family.

Nevertheless one by one brothers and sisters betray ... and invest outside ... leaving the designed victim alone.

The family collusion condemns to the ambiguous “heat” of the past the most fragile son/daughter as victim who will keep forever the family pact.

P.C. Racamier theorization: the family designed victim

But the victim herself is “guilty” of unconscious collusion:

- For allowing herself to consider given for granted the search for immediate gratification of affective needs and sexual desires inside the family practices.
- For avoiding the effort of the psychic work needed to postpone gratification and differentiate drives and desires.

Clinical research. The group setting

Therapeutic Group setting offered the occasion for:

1. Grasping the intermitted ambiguous clues and questioning the sense of “innocent” seductive and sexualized behaviours
2. Involving the whole group to reflect about the sense of any minimal sign of mental confusion (for ex. denial of generation differences, excess of familiarity with conductor, not respect of group members privacy etc)
3. Exploring the sense of the here and now group dynamics and connecting it with past family contexts

4. Offering conductor's exploratory interpretation about present given for granted "promiscuous" practices as unconscious repetition of past habits

Therapeutic Group setting offered the possibility of catching the collusive process leading to the "victim" role

1. Letting emerge terror of being abandoned by group members
2. Fear of not being able to build a personal affective life
3. Intermittent insight/fear of being too fragile to "live" without the group support
4. Intermittent consciousness and consequent rage for the violent characteristics of group collusion without considering the designed victim fragility.

I will now relate on one of the therapeutic group processes chosen here as a clinical confirmation of the research hypothesis.

A CLINICAL CASE THE CASE OF MANUELA: AN INCESTUAL FAMILY VICTIM

Manuela introduces herself to the group

Manuela is a journalist, a brilliant and attractive young woman, the last daughter of a big family. She describes herself as the beloved, spoiled, and preferred child.

She looks for therapy when increasing impotence feeling and frustration make her conscious to be unable to build her own affective life.

She complains about her relationships at work being so unsatisfactory, though she is kind to everybody. She reports how she uses her authority role being kind, inviting people at home ... in vain.

Her male colleagues accept her invitation but do not invite her.

Female colleagues exclude her, do not even include her when chatting ... gossiping..

Manuela doesn't feel considered ... part of the group.

Her disappointment is gradually growing... unhappiness... loneliness feelings are increasingly accompanying her. The sense of failure and frustration is growing inside her.

Gradually she realizes something inside her is not working.

Weeks, months... months of frustration ...

Other women less attractive are always preferred to her...

Rage, rebellion in Manuela make her change and transform into an aggressive, imposing figure, a sort of tyrant at work ... making use of her role, of her power

Manuela Role inside the therapeutic group

Soon after her arrival in the group Manuela adopts her past charming role of the spoiled child, seducing the group with her spontaneity, sense of humor, warmth.

In a few months gaining the role of the "affective leader".

The group accepts, by silent agreement her "conduction", doesn't seem to suffer from the evidence that in the long run other members' problems are always left behind.

Then Manuela slowly changes... starts invading the group with long descriptions of her family situation at home, of her old mother lonely life.

Long descriptions revealing her “unusual” attachment to her family... but it was not caught ... Her past spontaneous charming presence is transforming into an heavy one. Groupanalyst intervention trying to question present group dynamics are neglected.

The groupconductor exclusion from the regressive group dynamics

Being excluded by the group I started wondering on the sense of the group collusion in blocking the group process, avoiding the psychoanalytic work.

Why did the group protect Manuela for so long and let her play the role of the group leader?

Why my interventions related to the here and now group process as possible repetition of past contexts, connecting Manuela old mother to the present groupanalyst were ignored?

What did the old mother symbolize? Why was the old mother becoming so present in Manuela speeches? Maybe it was because of mother fragility? Mother needing the family care, not being able to look after herself?

In my mind many questions were animated

Perhaps the group members, who had their personal life outside the group, had been induced to feel guilty, had collusively accepted ... adopted a passive role... granted a leading role as an unconscious reward to the silent accusation of being guilty... but why guilty?

May be there was a silent agreement on the group horizontal line, a pact between brothers and sisters?

Which agreement? Was it an echoing of what had happened in Manuela family? She was acting and inducing the group to act something. But why did the present group agree?

What was clear was that the group members did no longer talk of their problems with husbands, wives, sons, daughters ... only Manuela old mother issues were allowed to be discussed.

The issues Manuela was stuck to.

Were they probably induced to feel guilty, but for what? For enjoying their life outside while Manuela didn't?

Was there an agreement to protect forever... what, whom? Why did all agree to resonate on Manuela imposing dynamics?

Manuela dominated the group while talking of a neglected person, the old mother, the most fragile family member? someone who couldn't survive without the group help? Why the old mother? Or the old mother was a symbol of the most fragile member, of Manuela ? The present group was repeating on the scene, was acting what Manuela was describing .

Groupconductor's doubts brought her to decide... Anyway the group had unconsciously regressed and “agreed” to avoid the psychoanalytical working through, to block the elapsing of time: a never evolving group. It was time to make advantage of these thoughts....

The groupconductor regains her role

... And the conductor regains her role imposing the group to reflect on the regressive dynamics.

Out of group elaboration members started to question and acknowledge the sense of the

regressive group dynamics.

To refuse Manuela regressive “leadership”.

They started to work... Rebellious and leaving Manuela alone.

The last one... almost forced to accept the new group reality.

Manuela had lost her leading role... She had to accept reality and sadly start her long therapeutic process... a very painful one.

Then two members start talking of the project to end therapy

And one day two members begin to talk about ending their analysis ...

a sort of thunderbolt for Manuela ...

“but if you have just begun to understand, your problems... you already go away?” protests

Manuela revealing her plan to live her life inside the group.

And Michela announces she at least is expecting a baby... after years and years ...

Manuela defends collapse and let incestual introjections come to the foreground

Manuela faces her inner and outer reality: she is the only group member not having a personal life, relying only on the presence of group in her life...

A too painful reality

Her defenses collapse ... she falls ... into desperation ...

...and the group witnesses her breakdown.

Crying desperate she starts an “unbelievable” report of her practices when she faces loneliness at home:

when she feels desperately alone on Saturday and Sunday she feels so frightened... phones

her male colleagues in turn inviting them to keep her company ...then asking them to stay

overnight...to sleep in the same bed...sexual games give her relief... at last. But on Monday

morning at work she is astonished to see they no longer care for her.

She cannot believe it!, why is this always happening?

The Group rebellion

Maddalena attacks Manuela

“why didn’t you ever tell us in the past what you do with these men who are friends,

colleagues, ... and the next morning you expose yourself without dignity to be side to side to

them working in the same office as if nothing had happened? but you don’t feel embarrassed?

what is happening with you?

For months the little girl, always talking about your mother!! You have made a fool of us!”

The group is rebelling ... All of them against Manuela ...

Out of the shocking situation Manuela seems to fall into a desperate confusion.

She can’t understand why the group attacks her.

And Manuela narrates ...

A painful long long process of intermittent insights and sudden closing ... sharing... pieces of

memories of her family life ... suddenly stopping ... when catching others astonishment....

.. her solitude ... her unhappiness ... brothers and sisters continuing to console her to mutually console themselves ... searching emotional contact ... body contact as they did when child ... sexual games helping to fall asleep in the same bed to calm night fears ...
A family system, based on the illusion to console... to stop painful feelings using childhood habits, to continue using them not acknowledging new sexual phantasies ... with the illusion to have access to genital sexuality simply repeating the practices of the past.
Why then Manuela shouldn't repeat past habits to try to console herself when feeling alone searching male colleagues consolation when these practices were shared by the whole family, given as normal...?

Final reflections

In the therapeutic group Manuela at the beginning had repeated the seductive role of the spoiled charming latest daughter, a conscious memory of her big family dynamics. She had seduced the group with her warmth, sympathy ... playing the role which granted her success in the past.

A seduction that in the beginning was inspired by her childhood affective role. But slowly had become a cry for help unaware of the sexual implication in her request, due to her incestual mentality unconscious introjections.

The promiscuous practices she suddenly revealed after her breakdown, her astonishment and terrible delusion for the group rebellion was the starting point for her slow, intermittent long therapeutic process.

For allowing her to get rid of her secret victim role.

The incestual culture victim clinical story, witnesses the consequences of the ambiguity of a family group who had given affection, security, care in childhood respecting and encouraging sons and daughters affective and cognitive potentialities.

A family which had not respected the need for intimacy, privacy, originated by the increasing pressure of sexual impulses directed to the same figure who had assured care and handling.

It had, like all incestual families do, denied the necessity of the psychic work for modulating new gestures of affection recognizing new emerging needs, new fantasies and sexual attractions without acting them.

The therapeutic group regressive dynamic has allowed to reveal the presence of incestual mentality in Manuela.

It had helped her to elaborate the painful sense of the deceptive family practices, family agreement of letting her alone as the designed victim.

What the group didn't !

She could end her therapeutic process in four years after her breakdown

One of the clinical group stories confirming the research hypothesis

THE UNEXPLORED TERRITORY OF THE SEXUAL UNCONSCIOUS IN TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Antonio d'Angiò

Psychiatrist Group-Analyst

Professor on Intercultural Communication at Department of European and Mediterranean Political Studies

Second University of Naples.

General Secretary of EATGA (European Association for Transcultural Group Analysis)

In his book “La sessoanalisi, alla ricerca dell’inconscio sessuale” (“Sex analysis, the pursuit of the sexual unconscious”), surely a book laying the foundations of a new and original approach to the world of sexuality and its dysfunctions, the author, Claude Crépault, explains the main concepts of Sexoanalysis (as a fusional Complex matching the needs for fusion and the needs for individuation, gender identity, profemininity, erotic imaginary and sexuality with all its conflicts...but we won’t go into the merits of this interesting book). Anyway these concepts seem to be particularly relevant for an effective transcultural reflection, for example the concept of “profemininity” can be a useful research tool to deal in a procedural appropriate way with some rites of passage like that faced by many African women victim by FGM where FGM (Female genital mutilations) more than potentially supporting the scientific hypothesis of the profemininity, represents a kind of “culturally dramatized naturalization” of panfemininity which in some way removes from women body the ambivalence of its meanings, so to place it into the cultural models passed on by tradition. In this way they are also able to conceal a cultural construction of the gender belonging. But this is not the topic of today meeting.

In the mentioned book, my friend prof. Crépault closes its short but intense introduction and writes: “I always try and refer to empirical researches and I feel particularly inspired by the transcultural studies so to avoid falling into the trap of ethnocentrism. After all, I can’t see how a theory of psychosexual development might do without a knowledge of ethnosexology”.

First question: Is a true ethnosexology possible as an independent science? Let’s say a comparative or transcultural sexology?

We are all perfectly aware that we cannot currently rely on such a level of studies able to lay down a comparative theory of the psychosexual development between the different cultures... so waiting for an Ethnosexology to come, with a scientific base specifically related to accurate transcultural studies, my attempt will be that of introducing from a purely inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary perspective the placement of concepts like “Incest”, “Oedipus”, “Culture”, “Ethnicity” in the complex and fruitful intersection between anthropology and psychoanalysis. And this, not only to approach a possible transcultural theory of a psychosexual development but above all to back up an ethno-psychoanalytic reflection in the troublesome field where

anthropologists have become focusing the majority of their efforts and energies, such as: family and kinships ties, social organization and the mechanisms of reproduction and forms of powera field where the implications of concepts like Incest and Oedipus complex still remain crucially relevant for psychoanalysts ...in order to achieve this goal we will need the help of other disciplines and knowledge

Psychoanalysis shall first of all ask for the support of anthropology (cultural, dialogue-based, interpretative), aware that the meeting point between anthropology and psychoanalysis means today first of all a place of query of the borders and the status of identities, as well as of the public matrices of thought and the new forms of social relationship, of the tragic crisis of Subjectivity and the inter-subjective paradigm. This, the scenario where the dialogue between these two kinds of knowledge is played today, leaving on the background the contributions of its forerunners and that distance which according to Levi-Strauss created the opposition between anthropology and psychoanalysis, starting from the role assigned to concepts like subject and unconscious....

Focusing on these two conceptual categories (subject and unconscious) I must say that the points (apparently three points but mostly the one comprises the others) that I'd like to bring to your attention are:

- How much and how the search for a sexual unconscious is able to use in a suitable cultural way conceptual categories – pertaining the complex stages of the psycho-sexual development – created and experimented in the Western world? In other words
- What are the tools available to the researcher aiming at dealing with sex-analysis in different cultural contexts others than the western ones?

Under an ethno-psychoanalytic perspective:

- What kind of eyes are we looking at this unexplored territory between sexual unconscious and cultural unconscious with?

Everybody is aware that when talking about sexual unconscious we are referring to that world (of course less globalized than Freud's world) made out of attractions, perceptions, fantasies and erotic imaginary, links and enjoyment relationships, but also made out of fears, incertitude, pushiness, energies released in the affective relationship with the other. If, vice versa, we want to define the cultural unconscious (defined by Devéreux also ethnic), clearly we refer to that part of the entire unconscious of an individual he shares with the majority of the members of his same culture. It is made out of all that, pursuant to the basic needs of his culture, every generation learns to get rid of and which in turn forces also the next generation to remove. This section, varies at the varying of culture and is passed on in the same way culture is passed on, that is through a kind of "teaching/learning" process and not through a biological one. (G. Devéreux, 1978)

The incestual, as masterly recalled by Mrs. Giovanna Cantarella, is a neologism describing a specific condition of psychic and relational life where the non-acted incest keeps on hovering in the emotional atmosphere of a patient, a family or a team and it might also "hover"

(as sometimes happens) into a group-analysis setting.

The incestual – affirms Racamier - is a climate in which the winds of incest blow without there actually being an incest. No matter where its gusts arrive, there is the desert, there suspicion is instilled and the silence and secret”.

Starting from the fact that this is a neologism with a cultural connotation, since it originates in France, that is at a certain specific cultural latitude and in a specific historical and cultural setting where psycho-analytic observation has always been quite reliable in terms of interpretation of reality, if not, on certain occasions, a clear heuristic hegemony, we shall assume that incestual, precisely as a neologism, is basically a “cultural construct”.

We intend actually to recover a line of research which today appears to be crucially necessary since the more and more frequent and intense occasions of meeting between different cultures raise the question of the translation of different languages. But, let’s also assume that no “translation” is possible if first the meaning isn’t clear to be assigned to the restrictive forms, to the mysterious and though still existing taboos on which any symbolic and culturally differentiated construction is based, as well as on which languages and culturally-featured ways of living, behaviours and family relationships characterized by different cultural proxemics are based; where the intimate life space can sometimes have blurred borders compared to the personal or public life space...

Under this perspective, psychoanalysis – as demonstrated by Giovanna Cantarella in the clinical case introduced - has much say on the matter, provided that (we shall add) it is ready to open up without taboos – as we said at the very beginning – open up towards disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics and ethology, all strongly interconnected to the interpretation of the so-called “taboo of incest” like that of the myth of Oedipus, the endless myth which has maybe characterized more than any other mythical character Western thinking.

So, the first part we will be exploring - by analysing a case followed in ethno-psycho-analytic sessions by Tobie Nathan at the Center George Devereux in Paris on certain specific configurations of family systems and family relationships in societies with a traditional culture – will be led by the need to understand whether and how much the “universal ban“ of incest might be considered in such an extent a culturally-based narration or even (as in the case of Nathan we will be introducing in a while) be used by psychotherapists to turn incest into a witchcraft. , so to establish a precise mind space where the patient might manage to process his conflicting thoughts, without the need for using incest to explain this psychic trouble.

The second part we will be exploring is basically an attempt to elaborate on the reflection on the Oedipus in non-western societies starting from the Trobriand young guys observed by Malinowsky up to the researches carried out by Ernst Jones, Melford Spiro (1982), Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour and Meyer Fortes (1983). These two parts are strictly interconnected, as we will have the chance to see.

At the time of his first consultation Charles was thirty-six years old. He comes from Cameron, he belongs to the ethnic group of Douala, he has been living in France for 14 years. He works for a bank where he is in charge of the customer relations. He has been sent to consultation by his psychoanalyst who has been treating him for a year. He feels quite anguished and explains his troubles in two different moments. In the first part, he describes a suffering which fits well with the psychoanalytic method he has been treated regularly with for a year. He says he experiences phobic symptoms which disturb him and prevent him in the practice of his profession. Inhibition of thought, on certain occasions; phobia of telephone, particularly each time he receives a phone call by a customer; inability to read the mails or to reply to mails received by customers. He also experiences ideas of persecution: he feels they mock him because he is a black; he is criticized; he is not respected as his role in the institutional hierarchy would deserve him... To this point we felt we are confronted to a phobic neurosis, but why is his psychoanalyst addressing him to us? Just because he comes from Cameron? We ask him whether he has also consulted a nganga, a healer. He immediately understands that most likely we are getting to affirm that he has been a victim of a "night aggressor". Just this simple allusion to an ethiology of witchcraft. modifies his speech, both in form and content. It seems he has been moved to a family meeting; he discusses, argues, he confronts, he guesses our interpretation attempts, he corrects them. At first he only reveals us a small suspicion of a destructive witchcraft. activity towards his family. Over recent period there have been three deaths in eighteen months: precisely one every nine months. In fact, this is the reason why he has consulted a psychoanalyst because he feared for his life. But he carefully avoided to tell her...During the previous years, six deaths have occurred in seven years period. A scrupulous list of the deaths occurred in his family immediately follows. All started with his eldest brother dieing when Charles was six. Then a 24-years old niece, his eldest sister's daughter, died; his father when he was only 60 years old, his father's second marriage wife; another older brother, the older sister, mother of the niece died before, his mum; another older brother; another older sister...only short time ago he had talked about these events with his younger brother and they discussed long about the possibility of a witchcraft.

Only after the therapist had introduced in the scenario deriving from consultations the traditional ethiologies of pathology, Charles had first started advancing hypothesis of causes, he had been hiding till that moment.

According to his brothers, this is how the events would have occurred: at the time of their eldest brother's death, 30 years before, Charles's father had consulted a healer who had done a divination into a basin with water and roots. As he looked inside the basin, his father had recognised the face of his sister, but he had refused to throw the small arrow the healer was giving him against that image. Charles falls silent, he really looks scared. He reveals us: "I don't like talking about witchcraft. issues ". This change in the spirit of conversation is of course perceived by the therapists....

Follow-up of clinical observation

Charles got married at 27, quite late for a Douala. Four years later he harshly fought with his sister Georgette because of her husband who didn't love her. It all happened, he explains, since he interfered in their married life. Before this man, Georgette had been married to a white man with French origins, living in Cameron, 30 years older than her. Charles got along very well with him, who had introduced him in the bank circle, where he finally started practicing his job. But also the white man blamed him of interfering too much in his family affairs. The point is that he really love his sister, too much... Also Charles' marriage seemed having troubles and always because of his sister. Till his wife believed he had broken with his sister things went along well, but after the death of the parents and the brothers, Charles and Georgette became the eldest and so the heads of the family and it seemed they really believed they were leading the family! Charles tells us a dream: "Georgette had moved to France, had divorced and now that also he wanted to break with his wife... Then he mentions his father, who had only one sister. He also loved his sister "too much". And though sometimes he said she was a witch and that she could have done all her best to con him, she could have never hurt him. Georgette certainly casted sorceries like her paternal aunt to take possession over the lands owned by the family. One week before his niece death, Charles had a dream were he had sex with Georgette and asked her the divorce. Shortly after he had decided that he separated from his wife.

We believe Charles has entered a very fruitful association movement but that it can only persist if the ethiology linked to witchcraft. will constantly act as a container and a guide.... Charles is then invited to describe his incestual feelings. In the next session Charles tells us about a long discussion with his younger brother, who revealed him that his father knew that one of the daughters would have attempted to destroy the family and take possession over the lands. His brother also informed him that only three of the children will survive the massacre perpetrated by the witch and that he, Charles, won't be one of them. Nobody will have no effect against Georgette, exactly as their father could do nothing to prevent the evil deeds of their sister. Charles struggled with the brother, blaming him of being Georgette's accomplice. His brother also revealed him that in two months someone else would have died.

Charles: I'm quite anguished, all my symptoms are revealing again; I'm scared, I'm really scared....(Then he tells us about the dream): A plane – a Concorde – made a mistake in the take-off. My sister Georgette appeared and she pushed me ("leave me that seat") to better enjoy the view of the plane blast. I'm scared. I will do all I can to prevent the disaster I expect, even killing my wi...my sister. Oh, I was about to say my wife"...

Nathan: Shouldn't we call your sister "the night spouse"?"

Charles: Yea, you are right, she is with me every night...

Nathan: Isn't it that maybe you and Georgette, when you were small children, spied adults having sex, also your mum and dad?....

Charles: Mum and dad...I don't think so. I remember I spied the neighbours.

Nathan: "Move over, I wanna have a look", tells him Georgette in the dream...

Charles: So, the dream would have aroused the fear I felt when I spied sexual intercourses as a little child, is this what you are arguing?

Despite the significant improvements of our patient in processing his inhibitions, we still can't understand the reason why the ethiology linked to witchcraft. – a culturally orchestrated drama of murder – had taken over such an important role for him. The last exchanges of this session lead us on the track of a second traditional ethiology.

Charles: I can't understand why my father had revealed this to my brother instead of me. I don't think my father loved me so much, since as a child I was seriously ill. I never healed. So the healers nganga, told my father that he had to abandon me on a small island in the middle of the river. They organized the rite. My mother, unaware, went with them on the river shore. My father left with me on a dugout canoe and when he came back he was alone. When my mother came to see that I was no longer with him, she started screaming and crying, then she jumped in the water, she swam there and she brought me back on shore. From that moment on I never got sick anymore. My father then named me Mandiolé, which means "extraordinary child", but this word also contains a mystical connotation, something like "miraculous being". I also called my daughter Mandiolé. You see, my father didn't love me, because he accepted to abandon me...

Nathan: No, Instead I believe that your father knew what healing means, since taking care of someone it's not enough, you have to re-awake in him a fighting spirit and this is what he triggered in her by abandoning you....

It's plain to everybody that the associations of ideas by Charles could be easily be placed into a psychoanalytic interpretation grid: oedipal drives directed towards his sister but deriving from the previous ones addressed to his mother; aggressiveness towards oedipal rivals (father, brothers, brother-in-law) and burst of symptoms when these drives emerge, maybe triggered by family life and by anti-oedipal drives towards the daughter. Nevertheless, this means that these association series, that we have only partly mentioned here, were made possible by the structure of the traditional ethiology. Moreover, each time oedipal drives have been clearly expressed, a second ethiology had emerged based on the "exposition" of the child; a child, moreover, not fully human (a kind of "child- hippopotamus", for the Douala), which in the next sessions will lead to several elaborations before giving room to a new ethiology and so on. So, once realised the importance of these "theories", which in the end are true "containers of thought", will the essence of the therapy process be focused on an awareness raising of the drive impulses or better will we end up considering the extraordinarily effective function of the activation of ethiology systems?

How shall we now consider the incestuous love of Charles for his sister? Are the psychoanalysts right in thinking that the emerging neurosis of Charles shall be blamed to a defence from this drive impulses? Nothing is less sure than this; African thinking invites us, instead, to take into account an overturning of incest into witchcraft. which represents precisely the space within which Charles is able to process his conflicting thoughts.

Shouldn't we rather affirm that the incestuous love rescued Charles, entangled in the meshes of his neurosis, by granting him: 1) a new and unexpected facet of his thought; 2) a reunion with his belonging group (the Douala were once matrilineal and gave a great importance to sisters) thanks to the mediation of his therapy group; 3) a surprising identification with his

father, who in turn had been convinced he was a victim of witchcraft. by a sister he loved too much. Totally at odds with the western thinking, the African one, though recognizing it, doesn't use incest to explain psychic troubles. It uses it, instead, in a more subtle way, to help individual to acquire a psychic independence, while preserving his own roots. A great lesson of therapy technique...

About the love that bewitches

Brothers and sisters are for each other the first object of a quasi-mature heterosexual love...Almost immediately brothers and sisters experience a dangerous vertigo of deranging attractions, consisting in a twist of violence and tenderness; their love is a challenge where the one who wins is subjugated, their pleasure is a victory in the battle, their sadness is a veil covering with prudery envy and jealousy. Brothers and sisters feel the first and most powerful of all passions: the one that pushes me towards the other to discover a new image of myself, the one that makes me challenging my identity, my gender, my mood, my inclinations. The bond between brother and sister is the original chaos giving birth to any desire for differentiation.

Our societies force us to pretend we consider our sisters a free and independent individual. Our culture did not elaborate on this bond according to more complex modalities, leaving to each and every one the task of filling it with fantasies which are most unique to him/her.

Instead, traditional societies were able to handle such a contradictory relationship usually by loading it with multiple meanings. Often a sister is the bargaining chip par excellence: I offer a woman (my sister) to have another woman in exchange (my wife) and first of all a brother-in-law (who might come with me hunting, help me in my house, or simply one I can argue with). My sister is frequently also the access gate to my Ego: the one who penetrates her makes me "dirty", her body is my family and I will always be her safe harbor each time her, tired from the trades with foreigners, will wish to feel again the sweet warmth of what is familiar (see episode of Dinah, daughter of Jacob in the Genesis, XXXIV, 27). And if she will set a true alliance with a stranger man, it will be like a stranger element breaking into my body and my sister would turn into the most dangerous of witches. This is the reason why in many African societies the sister is regularly used to explain the psychic troubles of brothers...In France when we accept African patients for treatment, - affirms Tobie Nathan - we usually are impressed each time we observe how easy it is for the love of a brother towards his sister to turn all of a sudden into a suspicion of witchcrafts.

SECOND PART

Oedipus Complex

According to Malinowski, the young belonging to the sub-clan of their mother who in the Trobriand islands had their maternal uncle as legal father, denied to have any blood bond with their biological father: that's the reason why during their adolescence they clashed with their uncle and not with their father. In this society it was the maternal uncle instead of the father who represented the law and it was the relationship brother-sister the one leading to the processes of repression and symbolization. No other conclusion seemed possible: in societies

with a different family organization the oedipal complex either doesn't reveal in its traditional form or doesn't reveal at all. Ernst Jones instead affirmed that Malinowski interpretation aiming at shifting the attention from the sexual dimension of family relationships to that of the authority, was not questioning the truth of the oedipal complex: more simply the hate towards the father was shifted on the maternal uncle and the desire for the mother was replaced by that (incestuous) for the sister. In 1964 Anne Parsons, after examining the typical families of the South of Italy, suggested a "third type" of oedipal complex, inbetween the classical and the Trobriand islands one, where the weak identification of the son with the father was connected to the strong bonds between mother-son and father-daughter. More recently Melford Spiro (1982) going back to Jones attack, highlighted that the young are still more attracted by the mother who had been breastfeeding them than by the sister and to feel a secret antagonism with the father even in those cases where social structure doesn't show, as in the case of the Trobriand islands, an open conflict: Oedipus would in this case keep his place...

Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour tries to overcome these dilemmas with the assumption that the paternal role would be split in two: in the Trobriand islands between a social father represented by the name of the breed or by the maternal clan and a parental father object of the mother's desires. We land to a double paternal type: good and saviours on one side and punishing and judging on the other, a father who at the same time donates and takes away. On those islands the biological father is perceived in a "maternal" way, up to the point that, as recalled by Crépault when dealing with the concept of proto-femininity, he establishes a kind of fusional bond with the son.

Other analysts who dealt with the topic of Oedipus particularly in the African societies such as Meyer Fortes (1983) focus their interest more than on the attraction between child and opposite gender parent or on the antagonism between son and father, on the concept of "destiny" emerging from these two paradigms. In the Tallensi society (Ghana) where the son owes a conditioned respect and obedience to the parents and expects in exchange affection and support, the antagonism between father and eldest son is unanimously acknowledged but ascribed (shifted) to a different level: antagonism between destiny of the first and that of the second. The moment of father's death, event after which the son is only allowed to enjoy the full powers of adulthood, marks the victory of the son's destiny: till then the authority of the first is undisputed. And though the burial ceremonies turn the dead father into an ancestral spirit, thus allowing a further shift, a kind of metamorphosis: the material and legal authority turns into a mystic power, unconditioned and unpredictable. The ancestors keep exerting a limitless power which doubles the parental one and is constantly manifested into children's life. Health or illness, wealth or failure are all strictly sourced back to this mystic authority and to the destiny marking an individual since his birth. (see the rite of remedy in the case of Charles, always sick...)...the causes of failure or illness shall not be found in the person but in its ancestors and the relationship established with them. The obedience to their power and the impossibility for the individual to make independent choices would in the end exemplify a primacy of the community and its rules. The same couple Ortigues (the authors of the famous African Oedipus) ultimately describe the father as an image finally melting with that of the group of men gathered around the tree of words ("image par excellence of the collective law,

of cohesion and fertility”) and as for the settlement of the complex they wonder “ what does solving the oedipal situation in a world where the symbolic function of the father is still linked to that of the ancestor mean?

Few final remarks:

The case of Charles, as for the relation mind/culture and specifically in the psychotherapy practice highlighted how much African thinking might counterbalance the western one which – lacking a critical counterpart – would run the risk of sticking to an almighty, apologetic and unilateralist practice.

Ours was an attempt to speculate on a border line, that is the border dividing and at the same time connecting the broad field of psychoanalysis with the even broader and structured archipelago of the social psychology, of the intercultural relationship and the interpretative anthropology.

The main critical investigation tool has been the one of the (ethno)psychoanalytic “setting”, referring with this to a more or less technical dimension of an approach where the listening of difference keeps a central role. A difference which shall immediately be rethought alongside with its policies and habits, in a way to establish strategies of recognition and dialogue which shall not lead to new taboos, misrecognition and violence, both those deriving from ethnical deceit and those disguised behind the illusion of universal human being.

IL TERRITORIO INESPLORATO DELL’INCONSCIO SESSUALE NELLA PROSPETTIVA TRANSCULTURALE

Antonio d’Angiò

Nell suo libro “La sessoanalisi, alla ricerca dell’inconscio sessuale”, un testo sicuramente fondativo di un approccio nuovo ed originale al mondo della sessualità e alle sue disfunzioni, l’autore, Claude Crépault, espone i principali concetti della Sessoanalisi (come Complesso fusionale tra bisogni di fusione e bisogni di individuazione, identità di genere, profemminilità, immaginario erotico ...ma noi non entreremo nel merito dei contenuti di questo interessante libro). Molti di questi concetti sembrano prestarsi in maniera efficace alla riflessione transculturale: per esempio quello di “profemminilità” può essere uno strumento di ricerca utile per approcciare in maniera metodologicamente corretta alcuni riti di passaggio come quello a cui vanno incontro molte donne africane portatrici di MGF, dove le MGF più che configurare un possibile sostegno all’ipotesi scientifica della profemminilità costituiscono una sorta di “naturalizzazione culturalmente drammatizzata” di panfemminilità che sottrae il corpo della donna alla ambivalenza dei suoi significati per iscriverlo nei modelli culturali trasmessi dalla tradizione, riuscendo nel contempo ad occultare la costruzione culturale dell’appartenenza di genere. Ma non è di questo che ci vogliamo occupare oggi qui.

Nel libro citato, il mio amico, prof. Crépault conclude la sua breve ma intensa premessa, scrivendo :“Cerco di basarmi il più possibile su ricerche empiriche, e mi lascio particolarmente entusiasmare dagli studi transculturali per evitare la trappola dell’etnocentrismo. D’altronde, non vedo come una teoria dello sviluppo psicosessuale possa evitare la conoscenza dell’etnosessuologia”.

Prima domanda: esiste una vera e propria etnosessuologia come scienza autonoma? Una sessuologia diciamo comparata o transculturale?

E’ di tutta evidenza che non disponiamo al momento attuale di studi in grado di predisporre una teoria dello sviluppo psicosessuale in termini comparativi tra differenti culture...pertanto in attesa di una possibile Etnosessuologia che abbia in sé caratteri di scientificità legati a precisi studi transculturali, tenterò di illustrare su un piano squisitamente interdisciplinare e transdisciplinare il posizionamento di concetti come “Incesto”, “Edipo”, “Cultura”, “Etnia” nell’intersezione, feconda e complessa, del rapporto tra antropologia e psicoanalisi, non solo per tentare un approccio ad una possibile Teoria transculturale dello sviluppo psicosessuale ma soprattutto per fondare una riflessione etnopsicoanalitica nel campo dei problemi sul quale gli antropologi hanno speso buona parte delle loro energie come la famiglia e i legami di parentela, l’organizzazione sociale, i meccanismi della riproduzione e le forme del potere..... un campo dove invece per gli psicoanalisti restano cruciali le implicazioni relative al concetto di Incesto e di Complesso di Edipo ...per fare questo dovremo dunque chiedere aiuto ad altre discipline e ad altri saperi

L’aiuto che gli psicoanalisti devono chiedere è soprattutto all’antropologia (culturale, dialogica e interpretativa), nella consapevolezza che l’incontro tra antropologia e psicoanalisi, è oggi in primo luogo interrogazione sui confini e lo statuto delle identità, sulle matrici pubbliche del pensiero e le nuove forme del legame sociale, sulla crisi drammatica della Soggettività e del Paradigma intersoggettivo. E’ questo lo scenario sul quale prende corpo oggi il dialogo fra questi due saperi che lascia ormai sullo sfondo i contributi dei suoi pionieri e quella distanza che secondo Levi-Strauss opponeva antropologia e psicoanalisi a partire dal ruolo attribuito in esse a concetti come soggetto e inconscio....

Proprio restando nell’ambito di queste due categorie concettuali (soggetto e inconscio) confesso che

le questioni (sono apparentemente tre ma sono contenute l’una nell’altra) che vorrei porre alla vostra attenzione sono:

1. quanto e in che modo la ricerca dell’inconscio sessuale è in grado di poter utilizzare in maniera culturalmente appropriata categorie concettuali - relative alle complesse fasi dello sviluppo psico sessuale - nate e sperimentate in Occidente?, ovvero
2. quali sono gli strumenti a disposizione del ricercatore che voglia approcciare la questione sessoanalitica in contesti culturali altri ovvero non occidentali?

Per dirla da un punto di osservazione etnopsicoanalitico:

3. con quali occhi guardiamo a questo inesplorato territorio che sta tra l’inconscio

sessuale e l'inconscio culturale?

E' di tutta evidenza che quando diciamo inconscio sessuale definiamo tutto quel mondo (ovviamente molto meno globalizzato di quello di Freud) fatto di attrazioni, sensibilità, di fantasie ed immaginario erotico, di contatti e rapporti di godimento, ma anche fatto di paure, di incertezze, di aggressività, di energie che si dispiegano nella relazione affettiva con l'altro. Se invece tentiamo di definire l'inconscio culturale (secondo Devéreux detto anche etnico) è evidente che il riferimento è a quella parte dell'inconscio totale di un individuo che egli ha in comune con la maggioranza dei membri della sua cultura. Esso è composto da tutto ciò che, in conformità alle esigenze fondamentali della sua cultura, ogni generazione impara a rimuovere e che, a sua volta, costringe poi la generazione successiva a rimuovere. Tale segmento cambia col cambiare della cultura e si trasmette come si trasmette la cultura, mediante una sorta di "insegnamento/apprendimento" e non biologicamente. (G. Devéreux, 1978)

L'incestuale, come ci ha ricordato magistralmente la dott.sa Giovanna Cantarella, è un neologismo che descrive una specifica condizione della vita psichica e relazionale dove l'incesto, non agito, aleggia nell'atmosfera emotiva di un paziente, di una famiglia o di un gruppo di lavoro e che può anche "aleggiare" (come a volte accade) in un setting gruppoanalitico. "L'incestuale - dice Racamier - è un clima in cui soffia il vento dell'incesto senza che vi sia incesto. Ovunque arrivino le sue raffiche, si crea il deserto, s'istilla il sospetto, il silenzio ed il segreto".

Partendo dalla constatazione che questo neologismo sia culturalmente connotato in quanto nato in Francia e dunque ad una precisa latitudine culturale e in un determinato contesto storico-sociale in cui l'osservazione psicoanalitica ha sempre garantito una coerente affidabilità interpretativa della realtà se non addirittura in certe circostanze una evidente egemonia euristica, possiamo ipotizzare che l'incestuale, proprio in quanto neologismo, sia sostanzialmente una "costruzione culturale".

Ci proponiamo pertanto di riprendere una ricerca oggi resa assolutamente necessaria dal momento in cui l'incontro sempre più frequente ed intenso tra culture diverse pone il problema della traduzione di linguaggi differenti, ma riteniamo anche che non si possa operare nessuna "traduzione" se prima non viene colto il significato da attribuire alle forme restrittive, ai misteriosi e pur attuali tabù sui quali si fonda ogni formazione simbolica culturalmente differenziata così come si fondano linguaggi e stili di vita culturalmente marcati, comportamenti e relazioni parentali improntati a differenti prossemiche culturali dove lo spazio di vita intima può talvolta avere confini incerti rispetto allo spazio di vita personale o pubblico.....

In questo senso, la psicoanalisi - come ci ha ben dimostrato Giovanna Cantarella nel caso clinico riportato - ha molto da dire, purché (aggiungiamo) sia disposta ad aprirsi senza tabù - come abbiamo detto all'inizio - a discipline quali l'antropologia, la linguistica e l'etologia tutte fortemente implicate nell'interpretazione del cosiddetto "tabù dell'incesto" così come del mito di Edipo, il mito senza fine che forse ha caratterizzato più di ogni altra figura mitica il pensiero occidentale

Pertanto il primo aspetto che esploreremo - attraverso l'analisi di un caso seguito in consultazione etnopsicoanalitica da Tobie Nathan presso il Centro George Devéreux di Parigi, legato a particolari configurazioni dei sistemi familiari e di parentela in società a cultura

tradizionale - sarà dunque legato proprio alla necessità di capire se e quanto la “proibizione universale“ dell’incesto possa essere considerata, in una qualche misura, una narrazione culturalmente connotata o addirittura (come nel caso di Nathan che presentiamo più avanti) venire in aiuto allo psicoterapeuta attraverso il rovesciamento dell’incesto in stregoneria così da costituire precisamente uno spazio mentale entro cui il paziente possa giungere a elaborare i suoi pensieri conflittuali, non necessitando di chiamare in causa l’incesto nella spiegazione del disturbo psichico.

Il secondo aspetto che esploreremo sarà più propriamente il tentativo di riassumere la riflessione sull’Edipo in società non occidentali a partire dai giovani trobriandesi osservati da Malinowsky fino alle ricerche di Ernst Jones, Melford Spiro (1982), Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour e Meyer Fortes (1983). Questi due aspetti come vedremo sono intimamente legati

PRIMA PARTE: Charles

Osservazione clinica: l’amore che strega

Charles, all’epoca della prima consultazione ha trentasei anni. Viene dal Camerun, è di etnia Douala, risiede in Francia da 14 anni. Lavora in una banca, dove si occupa delle relazioni con la clientela. Viene inviato in consultazione dalla sua psicoanalista presso la quale è in trattamento da un anno. E’ molto angosciato ed espone i suoi problemi i due tempi. Nella prima sequenza descrive una sofferenza che si articola bene con il metodo psicoanalitico a cui si è sottoposto assiduamente per un anno. Lamenta infatti sintomi fobici che lo disturbano nell’esercizio della sua professione. Inibizione del pensiero, in talune occasioni; fobia del telefono, soprattutto quando riceve la chiamata di un cliente; impossibilità di leggere la posta o di rispondere alle lettere dei clienti. Lamenta inoltre idee persecutorie: si burlano di lui perché è nero; lo criticano; non gli riservano il rispetto dovuto alla sua posizione nella gerarchia istituzionale. ... Fin qui abbiamo la sensazione di trovarci di fronte ad una Nevrosi fobica...ma perché la sua psicoanalista ce lo invidia? Solo perché è originario del Camerun? Gli chiediamo, a questo punto, se ha consultato anche un nganga, un guaritore. Capisce subito che intendiamo dire che forse è vittima di un “aggressore della notte”. Il semplice accenno ad una etiologia di stregoneria trasforma il suo discorso, sia nella forma che nel contenuto. Sembra trasportato in un’assemblea di famiglia; discute, argomenta, si contrappone, indovina i nostri tentativi di interpretazione, li corregge. Inizialmente ci comunica solo qualche sospetto riguardo a un’attività di stregoneria distruttiva diretta contro la sua famiglia. Negli ultimi tempi ci sono state tre morti in diciotto mesi: esattamente una ogni nove mesi. In realtà, è per questo che ha consultato la psicoanalista, perché temeva per la propria vita. Ma si è guardato bene dal dirglielo. ...Negli anni precedenti si erano verificate sei morti nell’arco di sette anni. Segue a questo punto una minuziosa enumerazione delle morti avvenute nella sua famiglia. Tutto ha avuto inizio con la morte del fratello primogenito, quando Charles aveva sei anni.

Poi è morta una nipote di 24 anni, figlia di una sua sorella maggiore; suo padre a soli 60 anni, la seconda moglie del padre; un altro fratello maggiore, una sorella maggiore, madre della nipote morta, sua madre ; un altro fratello maggiore; un’altra sorella maggiore...Poco tempo fa ha parlato di questi fatti con il fratello più giovane ed hanno discusso a lungo, tra di loro, sull’eventualità di attacchi di stregoneria.

Dopo la proposta del terapeuta di introdurre nel quadro delle sedute le etiologie tradizionali della malattia, Charles ha cominciato ad esprimere le ipotesi causali che aveva tenuto fino a quel momento segrete.

Secondo il fratello, gli eventi si sarebbero svolti come segue: all'epoca della morte del primogenito, 30 anni prima, il padre di Charles era andato a consultare un guaritore che aveva eseguito una divinazione in una bacinella piena d'acqua e di radici. Guardandovi dentro, il padre aveva riconosciuto il viso della propria sorella, ma si era rifiutato di lanciare contro questa immagine la piccola freccia che il guaritore gli porgeva. Charles adesso tace, sembra veramente spaventato. Ci confida: "Non mi piace parlare di problemi di stregoneria". Questo cambiamento nel tono della seduta non sfugge ovviamente ai terapeuti....

Seguito dell'Osservazione clinica

Charles si è sposato a 27 anni, un'età tardiva per un Douala. Quattro anni dopo ha litigato aspramente con sua sorella Georgette a causa del marito che non l'amava. Ciò accadde, ci dice, perché lui si intrometteva nella loro vita coniugale. Prima di questo marito, Georgette aveva sposato un bianco di origine francese, residente nel Camerun, di 30 anni più anziano di lei. Charles andava molto d'accordo con quest'uomo, che lo aveva introdotto nell'ambiente bancario dove poi avrebbe esercitato la sua professione. Ma anche l'uomo bianco lo accusava di intromettersi troppo nelle questioni della sua vita coniugale. Il fatto è che lui ama molto questa sorella, troppo... Anche il matrimonio di Charles sembra in difficoltà, e sempre a causa di sua sorella. Finché sua moglie aveva pensato che lui avesse rotto con la sorella, le cose erano andate bene, ma dopo la morte dei genitori e dei fratelli Charles e Georgette sono diventati i figli maggiori e, di conseguenza, i capi della famiglia, ed ecco che sembrano essersi convinti di dirigere veramente la famiglia! Charles ci racconta un sogno: "Georgette si era stabilita in Francia, aveva divorziato e, adesso che lui voleva lasciare la moglie... Poi parla di suo padre, che aveva un'unica sorella. Anche lui amava "troppo" sua sorella. Qualche volta tuttavia diceva che era una strega, ma che poteva pure impegnarsi in tutti i suoi raggiri, non sarebbe mai riuscita a fargli del male. Georgette fa certamente della stregoneria, proprio come la zia paterna, per impadronirsi delle terre di proprietà della famiglia. Una settimana prima della morte di sua nipote, Charles ha fatto un sogno in cui faceva l'amore con Georgette e le chiedeva di divorziare. Poco tempo dopo ha deciso di separarsi da sua moglie.

Pensiamo che Charles sia entrato in un movimento associativo molto fecondo ma che potrà mantenersi solo se l'etiologia legata alla stregoneria agirà costantemente come contenitore e come guida... Charles viene invitato a descrivere i suoi sentimenti incestuosi. Nella seduta successiva Charles ci informa di aver avuto una lunga discussione con il fratello più giovane, il quale gli ha rivelato che il padre sapeva che una delle figlie avrebbe tentato di distruggere la famiglia per impadronirsi delle terre.

Il fratello lo ha inoltre informato che solo tre figli riusciranno a sopravvivere al massacro perpetrato dalla strega, e che lui, Charles, non sarà tra questi. Nessuno potrà agire contro Georgette, proprio come il padre non era potuto intervenire per impedire le azioni malefiche della propria sorella. Charles ha litigato con il fratello accusandolo di essere complice di Georgette. Il fratello gli ha anche rivelato che entro due mesi ci sarebbe un'altra morte.

Charles: Sono molto angosciato, tutti i miei sintomi stanno riapparendo; ho paura, tanta paura... (Poi ci racconta il suo ultimo sogno): Un aereo – un Concorde – sbagliava decollo. Mia sorella Georgette appariva nel sogno e mi spingeva (“lasciami il posto”) per godersi meglio lo spettacolo dell’esplosione dell’aereo. Ho tanta paura. Farò tutto ciò che è in mio potere per evitare le catastrofi di cui ho presentimento, anche uccidere mia mo...mia sorella. Oh, stavo per dire “mia moglie”...

Nathan: Non si potrebbe chiamare sua sorella Georgette “la sposa della notte”?

Charles: E’ vero, tutte le notti è con me...

Nathan: Forse con Georgette, da piccoli andavate a spiare i rapporti sessuali degli adulti, forse anche quelli di vostro padre e vostra madre?....

Charles: Mio padre e mia madre...non credo. Mi ricordo di avere spiato dei vicini

Nathan: “Spostati voglio vedere”, le dice Georgette nel sogno...

Charles: Allora il sogno rievocherebbe la paura che ho provato da bambino nell’osservare quei rapporti sessuali?

Pur constatando i considerevoli progressi compiuti dal nostro paziente nell’elaborazioni delle sue inibizioni, continuiamo a non capire perché l’etiologia legata alla stregoneria – una drammaturgia dell’omicidio culturalmente orchestrata - abbia acquisito per lui tanta importanza. Le ultime battute di questa seduta ci mettono ben presto sulla pista di una seconda etiologia tradizionale.

Charles: Non capisco perché mio padre abbia fatto queste rivelazioni a mio fratello più giovane e non a me. Credo di non essere stato molto amato da mio padre perché da bambino, sono stato gravemente ammalato. Non guarivo mai. Allora i guaritori, i nganga, hanno detto a mio padre che era necessario abbandonarmi su un’isoletta in mezzo al fiume. Hanno organizzato la cerimonia. Mia madre, ignara, è andata con loro sulla riva del fiume. Mio padre è partito con me su una piroga ed è ritornato solo. Quando mia madre si è accorta che non ero con lui, ha cominciato a gridare, a piangere, poi si è tuffata e, a nuoto, mi ha riportato a riva. Da quel momento non sono stato più malato. Mio padre allora mi ha chiamato Mandiolé, che significa “bambino straordinario”, ma questa parola possiede anche una strana connotazione mistica, qualcosa come “essere miracoloso”. Anch’io ho chiamato mia figlia Mandiolé. Come vede, mio padre non mi amava, perché aveva acconsentito ad abbandonarmi....

Nathan: Credo piuttosto che suo padre sapesse cosa significa guarire, perché non basta curare qualcuno, bisogna risvegliare in lui lo spirito combattivo, ed è ciò che è riuscito a innescare in lei con questo abbandono...

E’ chiaro che le associazioni di idee di Charles potrebbero adesso iscriversi facilmente in una griglia interpretativa psicoanalitica: pulsioni edipiche focalizzate sulla sorella ma derivate da quelle prima dirette verso la madre; aggressività verso i rivali edipici (padre, fratelli, cognati) e irruzione di sintomi nel momento dell’emergenza pulsionale, probabilmente innescata dalla vita familiare e dalle pulsioni contro-edipiche verso la figlia. Tuttavia questo significa che queste serie associative, di cui sono state qui presentate soltanto alcune, sono state rese possibili dalla strutturazione fornita dall’etiologia tradizionale. Inoltre, quando le pulsioni edipiche si sono espresse nel modo più chiaro, è comparsa una seconda etiologia centrata sull’”esposizione” del bambino; bambino, del resto, non perfettamente umano

(quasi un "bambino-ippopotamo", per i Douala), che nelle sedute successive darà luogo a numerose elaborazioni prima di cedere a una nuova etiologia e così di seguito. Dunque una volta constatata l'importanza di queste "teorie" che, in effetti, sono dei veri "contenitori di pensiero", si continuerà ad attribuire l'essenza del processo terapeutico alla presa di coscienza dei moti pulsionali, o piuttosto si finirà con il considerare la funzione straordinariamente efficace dell'attivazione dei sistemi etiologici?

Cosa pensare, adesso, dell'amore incestuoso di Charles per la sorella? Gli psicoanalisti hanno ragione nel ritenere che bisogna attribuire l'emergere della nevrosi di Charles alle difese contro questo moto pulsionale? Non c'è niente di meno sicuro; il pensiero africano ci invita piuttosto a considerare che il rovesciamento dell'incesto in stregoneria costituisce precisamente lo spazio entro cui Charles giunge a elaborare i suoi pensieri conflittuali.

Dovremmo dire, piuttosto, che l'amore incestuoso viene in soccorso di Charles, impigliato nella rete della sua nevrosi, assicurandogli: 1) un nuovo e insospettato dispiegamento del suo pensiero; 2) un ricongiungimento al suo gruppo di appartenenza (i Douala erano un tempo matrilineari e accordavano un'importanza considerevole alla sorella) grazie alla mediazione del gruppo terapeutico; 3) una sorprendente identificazione con suo padre, anch'egli, un tempo, convinto di essere stato vittima degli attacchi di stregoneria da parte di una sorella troppo amata.

Agli antipodi del pensiero occidentale, il pensiero africano, pur sapendolo riconoscere, non chiama in causa l'incesto nella spiegazione del disturbo psichico. Lo utilizza, invece, nel modo più sottile per aiutare l'individuo a rendersi psichicamente autonomo conservando le proprie radici. Una bella lezione di tecnica psicoterapeutica...

Dell'amore che strega

Fratello e sorella sono, l'uno per l'altra, il primo oggetto d'amore eterosessuale quasi maturo... Fin da subito, fratelli e sorelle provano la pericolosa vertigine di inclinazioni perturbanti, costituite da un intreccio di violenza e tenerezza: il loro amore è una sfida in cui è il vincitore a essere sottomesso, il loro piacere è una conquista sulla guerra, la loro tristezza un velo che copre pudicamente l'invidia e la gelosia.

Fratelli e sorelle vivono la prima e la più potente delle passioni: quella che mi proietta verso l'altro per scoprirvi una nuova immagine di me, quella che mi fa dubitare della mia identità, del mio sesso, del mio umore, delle mie inclinazioni. Il legame tra fratello e sorella è il caos originario da cui nasce il desiderio di differenziazione.

Nelle nostre società si deve fingere di considerare la sorella come un individuo libero e autonomo. La nostra cultura non ha pensato a elaborare questo legame secondo modalità complesse, lasciando a ciascuno il compito di popolarlo di fantasie che considera uniche.

Le società tradizionali, invece, hanno saputo padroneggiare una relazione così contraddittoria, in genere caricandola di una molteplicità di significati. Spesso la sorella è la moneta di scambio per eccellenza: offro una donna (mia sorella) per ricevere una donna (mia moglie) e, in primo luogo, un cognato (perché mi accompagni nella caccia, mi aiuti a costruire la mia casa, semplicemente, con cui poter litigare) Mia sorella, spesso, è anche la porta del mio Io: chi la penetra mi "sporca"; il suo corpo è la mia famiglia e io sarò sempre il

suo rifugio quando stanca del commercio con gli stranieri, desidererà gustare di nuovo il dolce calore di ciò che è familiare (vedi l'episodio di Dinah, figlia di Giacobbe, in Genesi, XXXIV, 27). Ma se le accadesse di stringere una vera alleanza con l'intruso, un corpo estraneo farebbe irruzione nel mio organismo, e mia sorella diventerebbe la più pericolosa delle streghe. E' per questo che in numerose società africane la sorella è sistematicamente incriminata quando occorre spiegare i disturbi psichici del fratello...In Francia quando prendiamo in carico dei pazienti africani, - dice Tobie Nathan - ci sorprendiamo talvolta nel constatare con quanta facilità l'amore che un fratello nutre verso la sorella possa improvvisamente trasformarsi in un sospetto di attacchi di stregoneria

SECONDA PARTE

Il Complesso di Edipo

Secondo Malinowski, i giovani appartenenti al sottoclan della madre che avevano, nelle isole Trobriand, per padre legale lo zio materno, affermavano di non avere alcun legame di sangue con il padre naturale: ciò spiegava perché nel corso dell'adolescenza essi avessero conflitti con lo zio ma non con il padre. E' lo zio materno, non il padre, a rappresentare infatti in quella società la legge, ed è la relazione fratello-sorella quella che veicola essenzialmente i processi di repressione e di simbolizzazione. La conclusione sembrava inevitabile: in società a diversa organizzazione familiare il complesso edipico non è presente nella sua configurazione canonica, o non è presente affatto. Ernst Jones riteneva però che la revisione di Malinowski, rivolta a spostare l'attenzione dalla dimensione sessuale delle relazioni familiari a quella dell'autorità, non metteva in discussione la verità del complesso edipico: più semplicemente l'odio per la figura paterna era dislocato verso lo zio materno e il desiderio della madre era sostituito da quello (desiderio incestuoso) della sorella. Nel 1964 Anne Parsons, prendendo in esame la famiglia del Meridione d'Italia, proponeva un "terzo tipo" di complesso edipico, intermedio tra quello classico e quello trobriandese, nel quale la debole identificazione del figlio con il padre si associava alle relazioni relativamente più forti madre-figlio e padre-figlia.

Più recentemente Melford Spiro (1982) riprendendo l'offensiva di Jones, ricordava che i giovani continuano ad essere attratti dalla madre che li ha nutriti al seno assai più che dalla sorella, e a provare una segreta ostilità per il padre anche in quei casi in cui l'organizzazione sociale non lascia emergere, come nel caso delle isole Trobriand, un conflitto aperto: L'Edipo rimarrebbe al suo posto...

Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour prova a uscire da questi dilemmi sostenendo che la funzione paterna sarebbe scissa, nelle isole Trobriand, fra un padre sociale, rappresentato dal nome del lignaggio o del clan materno, e un padre genitore, oggetto del desiderio della madre. Nasce così una figura paterna doppia: buono e salvatore da un lato, che punisce e giudica dall'altro, di un padre che dona e di un padre che toglie. In quelle isole il padre biologico è percepito in modo "materno", al punto, come ci ricorda Crépault a proposito del suo concetto di profemminilità, da costruire una relazione quasi fusionale con il figlio.

In altri analisti che hanno approcciato la questione dell'Edipo nelle società soprattutto

africane come per es. Meyer Fortes (1983) il centro dell'interesse non è tanto l'attrazione tra il figlio e il genitore di sesso opposto, o l'ostilità tra il figlio e il padre, quanto piuttosto la nozione di "destino" che questi due paradigmi lasciano emergere. Nelle società Tallensi (Ghana) dove il figlio deve obbedienza e rispetto assoluti ai genitori, aspettandosi in cambio affetto e sostegno, l'ostilità tra il padre e il primogenito è unanimemente riconosciuta ma ricondotta (spostata) su un altro livello: l'ostilità tra il destino del primo e quello del secondo. La morte del padre, evento solo dopo il quale è consentito al figlio l'accesso ai pieni poteri dell'età adulta, è il segno della vittoria del destino del figlio: fino a quel momento l'autorità del primo rimane indiscussa. Ma i riti funerari trasformano il padre morto in spirito ancestrale, consentono un ulteriore spostamento, una sorta di metamorfosi: l'autorità materiale e giuridica si trasforma in potere mistico, assoluto e imprevedibile. Gli antenati continuano a esercitare un potere senza limiti, che ripete quello genitoriale e si manifesta ininterrottamente nel vita dei figli. Salute o malattia, benessere o insuccesso, sono intrinsecamente ricondotti a questa sorgente di autorità mistica e al destino che caratterizza un individuo dalla nascita. (vedi per es. il rituale di riparazione nel caso di Charles, sempre ammalato...)...le ragioni dell'insuccesso o della malattia non dipendono dunque dalla persona ma dagli antenati e dal rapporto stabilito con essi. La sottomissione al potere di questi e l'impossibilità da parte dell'individuo di operare scelte autonome, esprimerebbero infine il primato della collettività e delle sue leggi. Gli stessi coniugi Ortigues (gli autori del celebre Edipo africano) descrivono in ultima analisi la figura del padre come un'immagine che va a fondersi con quella del gruppo degli uomini riuniti intorno all'albero delle parole ("immagine per eccellenza della legge collettiva, della coesione e della fecondità"), e sulla questione della risoluzione del complesso si chiedono "che cosa significa risolvere la situazione edipica in un mondo in cui la funzione simbolica del padre resta legata a quella dell'antenato?"

Solo qualche breve riflessione finale:

Il caso di Charles, per quanto attiene al rapporto mente/cultura e in particolare alla pratica psicoterapeutica, ci ha mostrato quanto il pensiero africano possa fare da contrappunto al pensiero occidentale che - in assenza di un contrappunto critico - rischia di chiudersi in una pratica onnipotente, apologetica e unilateralista.

Abbiamo tentato di investigare una linea di confine, ovvero la frontiera che separa e, nello stesso tempo, mette in connessione l'ampio territorio della psicoanalisi con l'ancora più ampio ed articolato arcipelago della psicologia sociale, della relazione interculturale e dell'antropologia interpretativa.

Lo strumento principale di investigazione critica è stato quello del "dispositivo" (etno) psicoanalitico intendendo con esso una dimensione più o meno tecnica di approccio in cui resta centrale l'ascolto della differenza. Una differenza che va urgentemente ripensata insieme alle sue politiche e ai suoi usi, per costruire strategie di riconoscimento e di dialogo che non si traducano in nuovi misconoscimenti e violenze, tanto di quelle generate dall'inganno etnico quanto di quelle dissimulate dall'illusione di un uomo universale.