

Time and the *après-coup*

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The author explores the different temporalities of developmental time, *après-coup* and what she calls 'reverberation time'. She considers the paradoxical temporality of the 'here and now', showing that it is not pure present, and describes at the micro-level of sessional material how progressive and retrospective time go inherently together, one being a requisite for the other.

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Issues concerning time are at the basis of psychoanalytic theory, of the analytic setting and of the clinical phenomena we encounter. They also underlie important technical and theoretical differences in psychoanalytic approaches, implicitly or explicitly. French psychoanalysts have emphasised the non-linear form of temporality of *après-coup*, which they contrast with what they say is the more linear developmental model of British analysts. In this paper I want to show that the two forms of temporality, developmental and *après-coup*, go inherently together, one being a requisite for the other, and can be found as such in the British approach.

Lacan was instrumental in throwing a spotlight on Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* the importance of which had not been recognised previously partly, according to Laplanche and Pontalis (1967), due to the fact that the same word was not used throughout in the translation of Freud (this is true of both the English and the French translation). In a later paper, Laplanche (1998) adds that, if the terms '*nachträglich*' and '*Nachträglichkeit*' were not always translated as the same word by Strachey (2002), it was because, in fact, the meaning given by Freud varies between three different usages. The first one simply means 'later'. The second one implies a movement from past to future: something is deposited in the individual, which is only activated later on—this is based on the model of the seduction theory where the trauma is constituted in two stages. Laplanche compares this to a delayed action bomb. Strachey's translation of *Nachträglichkeit* as 'deferred action', which many people now think is a bad translation and the reason why it has not been given importance in the English-speaking world, in fact, conveys this particular meaning quite well. The third meaning implies that something is perceived but only takes on meaning retrospectively. It is this third meaning, the one least present in Freud, which was picked up by Lacan and developed by French psychoanalysts. According to Laplanche (De Mijolla, 2002), however, while Lacan was the first to draw attention to the notion of *Nachträglichkeit* in 1953, he only pointed out its usage in the Wolfman and it was left to Laplanche and Pontalis (1967) to point out the more general importance

of the concept in Freudian theory. The second interpretation corresponds to Laplanche's own theoretical developments of Freud. However, other French psychoanalysts tend to use the concept in the third sense.

For this reason and because the implications of this type of retrospective attribution of meaning has underpinned a whole corpus of French psychoanalytic writing, I am using in this paper the French term *après-coup* rather than the German one, as I wish to specifically focus on this particular (third) meaning of *Nachträglichkeit*. I am aware that the situation is complicated by the fact that, in France, *après-coup* can also vary in its usage between the different meanings. Nevertheless, Green stresses the differentiation from a developmental aspect when he writes,

One can say that the originality of the French position is due to Lacan's influence; he was a radical critic of any form of geneticism, the ideas of which, in his opinion, are inconsistent with a dialectical approach. For it is thanks to him that the value of the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* has been reasserted, becoming a fundamental theoretical axis for French psychoanalysts (2002a, p. 7).

I think that it may be because of the Lacanian rebirth of the concept of *après-coup* and of Lacan's radical rejection of the body and biological development in psychoanalysis that the notion of *après-coup* has been held up as the divide between approaches—French and British. Lacan's modernisation of the concept did not seem to take account of the original description by Freud, which implied a restructuring following sexual maturation of the child (hence a developmental aspect). In fact, both temporal directions, developmental and *après-coup*, are present in Freud in important ways and I believe both need to be retained. The whole configuration of the Oedipus complex, the castration complex and the taboo on incest, the murder of the father by the sons, implies that a knowledge of the generations is unconsciously known as resting on the asymmetrical ordering of time from past to future. This in no way, of course, precludes a reassignment of meanings of the past in the present. Later on in this paper, I will be looking at how the two directions can be seen to interrelate at the micro-level of sessional material.

In British psychoanalysis there is more use made of the notion of *après-coup* than may appear because it is not referred to in these terms. It seems to me that it is implicit in the 'here and now' mode of interpretation, which can be considered a characteristic of the 'British School' because it cuts across all three groups. Sandler and Sandler, for instance, write, 'It is vital that the analyst give first priority to understanding, and if possible interpreting, what is going on in the *here-and-now* of the analysis' (1994, p. 290);¹ and Roth writes that 'our sense of conviction about our patient's internal world comes ultimately from our understanding of the *here-and-now* transference relationship between us—this is ... the epicentre of the emotional meaning of an analysis' (2001, p. 542). Roth also makes it clear that she does not restrict her interpretations to the 'here and now': 'Much of the filling in, the enrichment, the colour of the analysis takes place at a different level, while we become familiar with the quality and variety of our particular patient's particular world' (pp. 542-3).

It should be stressed that not all British psychoanalysts agree with the predominant use of here-and-now interpretations (King, Couch and Mollon are some of the ones

¹This is to be understood within their own model which distinguishes 'past unconscious' and 'present unconscious.

who have spoken against it). It also needs to be mentioned that a number of British psychoanalysts have been particularly interested in the writings of French psychoanalysts (Kohon, Mitchell, Perelberg, Parsons, Bollas, Kennedy, Rose) and they have sometimes specifically discussed the French notion of *après-coup* (for example, Perelberg and Jozef, 2002). When contrasting British and French psychoanalysis I am therefore not referring to those people who are working at the interface or have been consciously influenced by those ideas. Clearly there are many variations and even crossovers within each of these.

The liberty I take to generalise is also the one taken by Green who refers to 'L'École Anglaise' as opposed to 'L'École Française' and speaks of 'the famous "here and now"'¹ in this context (2002b, p. 78), and I am in a sense responding to him.²

The 'here and now' approach at first glance can appear as devoid of temporality altogether, since the interpretation is in the present, but I want to argue that the workings of a complex temporality can be described in the 'here and now'. In fact, the 'here and now' only makes sense in so far as it retains its temporal dimension, and incorporates the ambiguity of the two directions of temporality. It originates in Freud's notion of transference in which the past is reproduced in the present giving the opportunity to work on those issues from the past. Transference is no longer interpreted as resistance but the current interplay, and its modifications are the continual object of study. Joseph (1985), for instance, extends it to the 'total situation' and works largely within its parameters. The Winnicottian notions of transitional space and of play also delineate an area of immediacy of experience. The extent to which British psychoanalysts believe that the past can be known from the present, or at least hypothesised, varies, as does the extent to which they believe it is important to make explicit reconstructions or to develop narratives. The interpretation in the 'here and now' rests on the belief that it will carry the most emotional impact and is most likely to lead to psychic change precisely because it is current and that relating it to the past can serve defensive purposes. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the past has to remain implicit, however much in the periphery. When it is lost altogether it creates the form of impasse which O'Shaughnessy (1992) describes under the term of 'enclave'. The greatest danger is when *the analyst* has lost the temporal perspective in his/her own mind and is colluding with the patient in a malignantly denuded present. Such an enactment only becomes psychoanalytically useful when the time factor is reintroduced, at least in the analyst's mind.

While the 'here and now' approach has to imply a connection of present to past, most I think would also agree that the 'here and now' is never pure reproduction of the past, that the past is always a past as reinterpreted in the present, and that the possible and relevant objects of study are the current internal object relations and the way in which they get played out on the analytic scene. The 'here and now' approach rests on the notion that only the present can be known and that, while deriving from the past, it is in a complex relationship to the actual past. We can see that, in this sense, in the 'here and now' approach the temporal direction goes from present to past in that it recognises that the analytic setting and, I would also add, the particular dyad, gives the past its specific shape. It is, one can say, *a new creation of the past*. This direction from present to past is most clearly seen in the notion that one aim of an analysis is the modification of internal objects. Parental

¹Strictly speaking there is, of course, more than one *Ecole Française* and one *Ecole Anglaise* but generalising, while by necessity reductive, also makes comparisons possible.

objects at the end of analysis are 'known' as different objects from the ones they were at the start of analysis, even though we are still talking about the childhood parents. It is still a reference to the past, but a past which has been retrospectively resignified, that is, a past which is shaped *après-coup*. In that sense, like Molière's Mr Jourdain who has been speaking prose all his life without knowing it, British analysts have often been working with a notion of *après-coup* without naming it. Klein's description of the two positions and the post-Kleinian concern with mental organisations and structures of thinking and their fluctuations does not assume a linear developmental causality, but is concerned with current internal configurations. Each organisation restructures and gives new meaning to previous elements. The reorganisation can be progressive or regressive. This description is very similar to that of the reshaping of experiences *nachträglich* with the castration complex. Finally, infantile modes of relating are described as templates but do not assume a simple connection. Most take it for granted that the past cannot be known and that the analytic endeavour is focused on the internal past not the actual past, a past which is reshaped in the present. In Winnicott's work, too, which may seem on the surface to be based on a developmental view, there is, in fact, a much more complex temporal model. If we take, for example, his notion of 'the fear of a breakdown that has already been experienced' (1974, p. 104), this describes a very interesting temporal movement which we frequently find in clinical work. The depressed patient, for instance, fears his anger will destroy his objects while, at the same time, believing that his anger has already destroyed his objects. Usually the patient is only conscious of the future fear and finds the interpretation that the destruction has already taken place very meaningful. The analyst usually interprets the future or the past according to rational thought but, in fact, the two are happening at the same time in this non-linear form of temporality, which Winnicott captured so well.

For Freud, the psychic apparatus develops from having to deal with the time element. The absence of the object and the delay of satisfaction forces the ego to find means of dealing with that experience. The capacity to recognise and tolerate the frustration of the absence of the object marks a developmental stage and goes hand in hand with a sense of time and with the ability to anticipate the return of the object. In the '*fort-da*' game (1920) the child develops symbolic mastery over the unpredictable time span which accompanies the loss of the object. Symbolisation and language are born in that gap. Botella and Botella (2001) stress that, by playing the game, the child is attempting to keep alive the 'representation' of the mother and of the self, and that it is the loss of the representation which is the catastrophe and not the loss of the object as such.³ We can see how, in keeping alive the object, the time of separation which brings distress is *also* the time which can promote psychic development.

Conversely, underlying many pathological manifestations is the attempt to eradicate the time of experiencing with the consequences we know to symbolic

³Boris suggests that in the *fort-da* game the spool might represent not the mother but the child itself, 'who felt flung away and needed to be regathered and restored' (1987, p. 357). He continues, 'Otherwise why follow the thread to the looming presence of Death when an object-relations view would have been the more obvious and parsimonious one?' (p. 357). I assume that Boris is referring to the fact that this description of the game appears in Freud's paper *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920) and therefore has to do with the continual struggle between life and death forces. One could push this further and look at the game as representing the whole interplay between life and death forces and environmental factors played out in the internal world where the internal object and the self are, in turn, destroyed and restored.

functioning. One would be thinking of this happening when the destructive forces are too great or the good experience not sufficiently established. Timelessness is sought in such different states as religious ecstasy, drug-induced states and day-dreaming. In other cases, notably in melancholia, the past cannot be mourned and the future cannot be envisaged, and time seems to be frozen in the moment which lasts for ever, like death itself. One of the basic ways of dealing with psychic pain is narcissistic withdrawal, the main aim of which is to create a timeless universe in which there can be no loss. Boschan (1990), comparing the temporality of a neurotic patient with a patient with predominantly narcissistic pathology, describes how the latter stops and freezes time so as to protect himself from contact with the other and with his own emotions, which are experienced as a threat of destruction. I spoke earlier of the psychoanalytic impasse which hinges on the reduction of time to the present.

Klein has described, under the term of 'projective identification', the mechanism by which unwanted experience is got rid of. The less pain or frustration can be tolerated, the more rapid and all encompassing the mechanism, and the more this affects ego structure. When pain cannot be tolerated at all, the defensive process has to come in with such immediacy as to prevent all awareness of pain. Bion has gone further in suggesting that the incapacity to tolerate frustration disturbs the development of the apparatus for thinking itself, and instead of an apparatus for thinking there is a 'hypertrophic development of the apparatus of projective identification' (1962, p. 307).

When the pre-conception of a breast is met by no breast, if frustration can be tolerated, a thought develops. If on the other hand frustration cannot be tolerated instead of a thought there is a bad object fit only for evacuation ... The end result is that all thoughts are treated as if they were indistinguishable from bad internal objects; the appropriate machinery is felt to be not an apparatus for thinking the thoughts, but an apparatus for ridding the psyche of accumulations of bad internal objects (p. 307).

Instantaneity is a characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid mode of relating when frustration cannot be tolerated; it deals with psychic pain by immediately splitting and evacuating the unwanted feeling even before it can be experienced. It is this instantaneous aspect which I think gives the projection its violent quality. The violence is the rapid reaction of protection by expulsion, which in so doing violently intrudes into the object. The analyst may feel aggressed but I think that the intention is not necessarily aggression, and the violence can sometimes be the result of the strength and rapidity with which the patient protects him/herself by getting rid of an experience by pushing it into the analyst. What is referred to as 'massive projective identification'—a term first used by Segal⁴—describes a psychic phenomenon whose characteristic involves the near complete eradication of time, specifically the time of sojourn of an experience in the psyche.

Time is first in the mother's psyche in what Bion (1962) describes in the notion of 'reverie', the time of sojourn in the mother's mind of the inchoate Beta elements and their transformation into elements which the infant is able to assimilate. For the infant, therefore, the time which can be tolerated will be, at first, the time of transformation

⁴The first reference I found to 'massive projective identification' is in Segal's paper 'Notes on symbol formation' (1957). Before that, both Segal and Bion spoke of the 'massive use of projective identification' or 'massive resort to projective identification' (e.g. Bion, 1956, p. 345).

within the mother's psyche, if the mother is able herself to tolerate the time factor. I call 'reverberation time' the time it takes for disturbing elements to be assimilated, digested and transformed. It is the infant's introjection of that process and the creation of a reverberation time which enables the development of the infant's own capacity to develop and tolerate a sense of time. In the analytic interchange, the reverberation time may be of long duration with the analyst having to contain for months or even years the projections before transformation can take place. Carpy (1989) describes how the analyst's ability to tolerate the countertransference, in itself, even without an accompanying verbal interpretation, can over time produce psychic change. Something of the sort takes place with the use of what J. Steiner (1993) calls 'analyst centred interpretations' or Mitrani (2001) 'introjective interpretations'. The time element is fundamental here. It is the analyst's own capacity to wait, to tolerate remaining in discomfort, which can be introjected by the patient enabling him/her eventually to remain with his/her own state of mind. As the patient becomes more able to tolerate the feeling, one can see how the time lag before the expulsion of the unwanted feeling becomes longer until, eventually, the patient can stay with the previously intolerable feeling. The word 'work', which is used in connection with the psychoanalytic process as in 'working through' (*Durcharbeitung*) or Klein's 'working through the depressive position' and Green's 'work of the negative', suggests a different relation to time emphasising the aspect of process, as does the notion of integration to which it leads. This contrasts with the instantaneity of the hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, the immediate gratification or the instant expulsion of the unwanted emotion.

The 'reverberation time' created by the mother's and the analyst's capacity for reverie, which includes both a chronological aspect and a back-and-forth aspect between mother and infant, could be represented as spiralling in non-even ways (because the back-and-forth aspect takes varying lengths of time at different moments). The spiralling rather than straight line depicts the inherent necessity for the presence of another, external first, later external or internal. The internalisation of this capacity for reverie provides a basis for tolerating the passage of time of which there seems to be some kind of innate knowledge. Money-Kyrle (1968) called the inevitability of time and ultimately death one of the 'essential facts of life', although he wonders if it should be regarded as innately predetermined or whether it comes from the repeated experience that no good (or bad) experience can last for ever (1971). Either way, he suggests that the inevitability of death is 'a fact perhaps never fully accepted' (1971, p. 104). The anthropologist Edmund Leach notes that the word 'time' brings in two contradictory experiences, one involving the notion of repetition, the other a notion of non-repetition and of something irreversible. He suggests that people put the two together because of a psychological 'repugnance to contemplating either the idea of death or the idea of the end of the universe' (1953 [1961], p. 175)⁵ as when death is seen as a repetition of birth in religious belief. This makes one think of the '*fort-da*' game, which enables the child to tolerate the passage of time by reassuring him that continual repetition brings the previous order of things back again. I think that the rhythmical aspect of the game also brings the reassurance of one of the earliest experiences of time-as-repetition which is the rhythm of the heartbeat later followed by the rhythm of rocking and sucking. Whether innate, based on a preconception

(Bion, 1965) or learned from early experience, time as non-repetition is particularly hated because it is immutable, inevitable and leading to loss and death. This inevitable journey⁶ is part of the biological substrate which Lacan wanted to eliminate from psychoanalysis. And, as we know, he also wanted to eliminate the fixed session length as a given of 'analytic life'. It seems to me on the contrary that it is the interplay between the facts of life of time and the body, on the one hand, and the requirements for psychic survival, on the other, which makes up the psychoanalytic field. The analytic setting itself is anchored in a 'contrast of temporalities' (Sabbadini, 1989). The analyst becomes the guardian of time, of the knowledge that analysis has a beginning and an end, as does each session. This fact of analytic life is the third element that stops eternal symbiosis, the *folie à deux*, a fact which can be so persecuting it has to be attacked. It is linked with the immutability of the Oedipus situation. With the toleration of the oedipal situation and of the depressive situation, time can 'elongate'. Memories replace 'reminiscences'; thought replaces action. The past can be faced, accepted as past and distinguished from the present. Equally, the present can be lived in the present as distinguished from an idealised or persecutory future. The 'I am my father' becomes 'I am like my father', which marks the process of identification as opposed to the instantaneous projective identification of the presymbolic state. A notion of development and of differentiation emerges. The notion of *après-coup* adds complexity to this with its notion of the influence of the present on the past. Development itself implies resignifications. The depressive position is one which resignifies and gives new meaning to previously disparate states precisely because, in tolerating the passage of time, it brings the possibility of holding in mind different and even contradictory states. Bringing together the good and bad aspects of the mother can only be done because the passage of time is held in mind as a continuous experience rather than fragmented into instants. This is one of the things patients mention when they emerge from predominantly psychotic states of mind, that they have a new-found belief that a bad experience won't last for ever. Paradoxically, while time is elongated in a linear way, in the symbolic mode of thinking, opposite asymmetrical relationships are able to coexist. Being in the position of the child in one context and in the position of the adult in another, in the masculine position at times and in the feminine position at times, requires symbolic thinking, the ability to abstract the spirit rather than be tied to the letter.

I am therefore suggesting that both temporalities, developmental and *après-coup*, while appearing so different, in fact, go together, and that you cannot have one without the other. If Freud used the same term to refer to progressive and retrospective time I would say it is precisely because there isn't as clear cut a demarcation between them as seems to be sometimes implied. Laplanche has suggested that, because in the Freudian text *nachträglich* and *Nachträglichkeit* can be open to different possible interpretations, it would be preferable to always use the same term for the translation (unlike Strachey), in order not to impose a single meaning on a multivalent text (Laplanche, 1998).⁷ He suggests using the terms 'afterwards' and 'afterwardness'. Laplanche's own original view brings in the past in the notion of that which needs to be decoded by the child, which is the message coming from the adult other.

Freud says that departing on a journey is a symbol of death in dreams and missing a train refers to the wish to avoid death. 'These dreams say in a consoling way: "Don't worry, you won't die (depart)"' (1900, p. 385). Translation: 'imposer une signification sur un texte essentiellement ouvert' (Laplanche, 1998).

I will go on to show the interconnection between the two kinds of time at the microlevel of the session.

A is a woman in her early 30s who struggles with a sense that she can never become an adult. For her, you are either a child or an adult and she does not seem to have a notion of development or of integration. (I have noticed something similar to what I am going to describe in a number of patients.) An only child, she had also been a lonely child. The family had had to emigrate in difficult circumstances and she had been left a lot to her own devices. A had dealt with her difficulties earlier in her life by the use of amphetamines and still now sometimes relies on marijuana. The drugs induce a state of mind in which she feels relieved of constant persecution from a punitive superego; they transport her into a timeless world in which she no longer has to worry about anything, past or future. She has other ways, too, of being 'out of time', even without the drugs. She will, for instance, stare outside her window, becoming totally absorbed by the play of light and shadows from a tree on a wall, or by the movement of the leaves in the wind, oblivious to how much time has gone by. In the sessions, she resorts to repetitive memories with no modifications, which create that same sort of hypnotic sense of emptiness and *of* time having stopped. Compulsive day-dreaming is a feature of her life and often centres explicitly around creating immortality. She is keenly interested in newspaper articles relating to such things as the discovery of bodies which have been preserved in bogs or in icy mountains, and she scans the internet for the latest advances in cryogenics, the science of placing humans and animals at low temperature after death with the idea *of* bringing them back to life in future centuries.

Before I describe one way in which A freezes the progression of the sessions, I would first like to go back to the notion of *après-coup*. In so far as it describes the movement of time from present to past, a restructuring of the past in function of the present, it can be seen that an interpretation itself is an *après-coup* that reorganises previous perceptions and understandings. Sodore (1997), speaking of the patient's experience, makes a link between a 'mutative' insight, which appears suddenly but is only possible because of a slow maturation, and *après-coup*. Modern conceptions of psychoanalysis no longer aim at unearthing an objective reality but enable a continual reappraisal and modification *of* the past as internal world. The analytic process is a process of continual reinterpretation in which every new point arrived at encompasses and restructures what has been so far.

To come back to A, this restructuring often does not happen. Her material is very disorganised and confused. I will start by making various partial or trial interpretations in an effort to sort out what is going on. There will be a number of false tracks and eventually I can make an interpretation which feels right and makes sense of and organises the material so far. The interpretation seems to touch the patient, too, as right. Awhile later, however, A will pick up on one of the earlier things I have said. It is done as if what was said earlier has not been superseded by the later interpretation, as if there had been no sequence to the session. What had been said earlier was presented as if there had been no restructuring following my interpretation. I think of this as 'unpicking the tapestry', an image another patient had used in relation to not wanting to ever end analysis, and which came from the myth of Ulysses in which Penelope weaved all day and unpicked the tapestry at night, in order that the day would never come when the tapestry was finished and she would be forced to marry someone else. Relevant to my

subject is that Penelope is weaving a shroud. My patient A will unpick the threads of the image put together in an interpretation so that we will wind up with a collection of threads, all of equal importance, in place of a better picture of her internal world. By dismantling the retroactive resignification—the image built up *après-coup*—the patient is, in fact, also arresting linear progression.

The point I am making is that the same hatred of progressive time produces an attack on retroactive time. One movement cannot be separated from the other because retroactive resignification *is* developmental progression. For there to be progression there also has to be this kind of retrospective resignification. The forward movement necessitates a backward movement at the same time and, equally, the continual incorporation and restructuring of the past in the backward movement necessitates the ability to move forward. The ability to symbolise and for self-reflection necessitates a relationship to time which can allow for the double movement forward and backward in time. When the 'fact of life' of time, with its recognition of the oedipal configuration of generational differences, cannot be tolerated we get the paranoid or melancholic world where time is stuck in a moment which never ends. That moment might be located in the past as a fixed grievance, located in a persecuted and eternal present, or even located in the future as an eternal hope (Mehler and Argentieri, 1989; Potamianou, 1997).

I will now describe another rather different way in which an attempt is made to stop time, in this case by slicing. A number of patients describe recurrent images of slicing—slicing tops of trees, slicing breasts, slicing brains, slicing testicles. While the action originates in a sadistic phantasy, it is used as a protective device, the strength of the sadism being commensurate with the strength, immediacy and totality of the defence which is felt to be required. In schizoid patients it represents mechanisms by which emotions are separated from ideation, or emotions from other emotions.

With one such patient, B, it seemed to be an attempt to make the outside world manageable by receiving only minute amounts of stimuli at any one moment. He had the recurrent fantasy of slicing a brain as if it were a piece of ham. The slicing of the brain is the slicing of the input, which the patient believes cannot be processed because it is too confusing or too overwhelming or too exciting. This kind of slicing controls the outside world, and the analyst in particular, so that time doesn't move, flow, develop. In the session, there is a slicing from moment to moment. Slicing means that the session becomes a collection of unconnected instants and in that way the patient feels that nothing unexpected will happen. The future is eradicated because, like Zeno's arrow, you never get there. When I took up this slicing of experience with B, this led to his being able to convey for the first time an emotional experience. He spoke of waiting for a woman who never turned up and how this had reminded him of how awful he had felt when he was a teenager being in the company of a girl who did not respond to his interest in her. With this, he had been able to describe to me for the first time an experience that was not sliced up, which conveyed a sense of time and with it the pain of waiting and disappointment. It is relevant that the patient introduced this after my interpretation, by saying that it would be awful to be frozen in one of the slices, suggesting that the slicing does not entirely resolve the problem which is then dealt with by moving from slice to slice. B described another way of slicing when he told me that he wouldn't mind the coming analytic break because 'if you take a scoop out of the pudding and then shake the pudding it all gets

mixed up and it's as if there's nothing missing'. The whole flow of life was sliced into moments, like frozen unconnected stills, or else shaken into a formless pudding, both of which also made my experience in the sessions very strange and made it very difficult to have a picture of what was going on. We didn't seem to move forward, and being able to resignify the material was near impossible.

Freud called this sort of phenomenon, when associative links are severed, isolation. It is relevant that Laplanche and Pontalis (1967) suggest that what is severed is especially the connection to what precedes and succeeds the thought in time.

Riesenberg-Malcolm has written about the slicing of interpretations. She talks about a particular form of splitting when interpretations are sliced longitudinally: 'Everything said by the analyst seems to be there, as if each segment had been photocopied and repeats itself, scattered among different situations and people. Each new situation reproduces the interpretation as a faint, thin echo of itself (1990, p. 129). She suggests that the slicing denudes the interpretation of meaning and is both a result of and a defence against the experience of envy. Riesenberg-Malcolm's description of the use of slicing in relation to the interpretations is relevant to my topic since she describes this phenomenon specifically in terms of patients who, 'instead of using analysis as an emotional learning experience, invest all their energies in keeping it in a static condition' (p. 135). I am suggesting that behind this stasis is the fantasy that time can be stopped. The resignification of the interpretation is the movement forward which is attacked. Slicing separates a whole into thin, minute parts—into moments. A similar, though not as all-encompassing, dismantling takes place when it is specifically the links which are attacked, as Bion (1959) describes.

Time is intimately connected to the generativity which results from linking. It is the forward movement to the next generation and to the new thought. The attack on linking is an attack on time, the link between the parents which brings the next generation, the link between patient and analyst which generates the next interpretation, the link between one moment and the next, one session and the next, which enables a process of development to take place.

In my paper 'Phallus, penis and mental space'(1996), I use the term 'penis-as-link' to describe the linking aspect of the male element as distinct from the phallus. For Lacan (1966), the phallus is the object of the mother's desire, that which she lacks (a reference to Freud's notion that the girl's disappointment at not having a penis transforms into her wish for the father's penis and, by symbolic equation, the baby). It is what would complete the mother. Hence, it refers to an illusory wholeness, a state free of desire. To be the mother's object of desire is an absolute illusory state. In distinguishing phallus and penis-as-link I am emphasising that the phallus refers to an absolute narcissistic state, to being or not being, having or not having, while the penis-as-link, on the other hand, refers to the idea of another to be linked with and, in particular, to the image of a parental couple (which the phallus does not). What I call the penis-as-link is instrument of Eros whereas the phallus is the instrument of Thanatos in so far as it aims to destroy that link.⁸ I am using the word 'penis-as-link' in the sense that Britton (1989) writes of

⁸R. Steiner, in commenting on my paper 'Penis, phallus and mental space', writes that In his book *Über dem Traum* (1814), the German romantic writer Von Schubert, well known to both Coleridge and Freud, had already noticed that the phallus was also the pyramid of the Ancient Egyptian pharaoh's tombs, the phallus therefore being a symbol of death rather than of life if one also bears in mind the incest practised by the Pharaohs' (1996, p. 13).

the missing link of the triangle as the relationship between the parents. It is therefore the generative link, different from the breast which links mother and baby. It refers to a three-person relationship of self in relation to the parents and not to a two-person relationship of mother and baby. It is that which links the parental couple *in the mind of the child*. Bion writes that 'the prototype for all links ... is the primitive breast or penis' (1959, p. 308). I understand him to be saying that each exists as basic in its own right, and that there is an *a priori* knowledge of both. However, I am suggesting that, while the breast refers to a two-person situation, the penis refers to the parental couple and a three-person situation. The French psychoanalyst Michel Fain, in his book *La nuit, le jour* (Braunschweig and Fain, 1975), refers to the alternation of day and night as that of the rhythm of the presence of the mother and of her absence when she is with the father in the night. 'La censure de l'amante' describes how the mother 'dis-invests' her baby she has put to sleep and becomes again the sexual woman. 'When, having dis-invested her infant, she becomes woman again, it is for the sexual father and she thus remains in the line of symbolic organisation' (Fain, 1971). Looked at in this way one can see that time-as-repetition and unidirectional time may not always be as contradictory as Leach implies, if the repetition of night and day goes with the establishment of the oedipal structure. Leach does, in fact, also describe how, for the Greeks, the sexual act itself provides the primary image of time. He writes,

Most commentators on the Cronus myth have noted simply that Cronus separates sky from earth, but in the ideology I have been discussing the creation of time involves more than that. Not only must male be distinguished from female but one must postulate a third element, mobile and vital, which oscillates between the two. It seems that the Greeks thought of this third element in explicit concrete form as male semen (1953 [1961 J, p. 179).

The notion I have suggested of penis-as-link, which is reminiscent of this, is inseparable from time; it is the time of the parental intercourse. It implies separateness and bringing together. As a function it is represented in the analyst's interpretative mode which makes links—links between affect and ideation; between image and meaning; between past and present, and present and future; between one event and another, engendering a new configuration. The phallus, on the other hand, refers to a concrete imitative mode of identification, in the notion of 'the phallic woman'. It is what Sohn (1985) calls 'the identificate' and Donnet (1995) 'l'identification d'emprunt'. It is an imitation which is meant to confer desired qualities and uses to do so external visual attributes, rather than the internalisation of a function. This is a distinction between the letter and the spirit of something, the latter requiring symbolic capacity. The phallus has to do with narcissism and mania rather than object relations. It is about potency for the sake of potency. The phallus refers to an atemporal state: being the object of the mother's desire without interruption, without the presence of a third, for ever. It is the penis in never-ending erection; a state of constancy with no change, no beginning and especially no ending. There is no deflation and no mourning and actually no satisfaction since that, too, requires a time which comes to an end. With that narcissistic shield, the self is immune to all states of mind which bring in the past and the future: need, desire, regret, sadness, sorrow, guilt, shame. In the phallic mode of thinking states are constant. One is either small or big and the notion of a development from infant to adult,

from less mature to more mature, is absent. Patients who function primarily in this way think they desperately want to move on but, in fact, aim to abolish the continuity of time, their own past and their own future; they attempt to create stagnation and make their analysis atemporal. There is a reduction of time to a moment (Perelberg, 1997), or the wish to eliminate the frightening past⁹ or the frightening future. A 'psychic retreat' (J. Steiner, 1993) is such a temporo-spatial psychic immobilisation, as is a developmental 'fixation' (Rose, 1997).

One important curative factor of psychoanalysis is precisely that it is a process, that the time element is central to it. For some patients the analysis is more of a collection of sessions, and process is something of which the analyst is a guarantor. An aspect of this is the psychic work which takes place in the analyst when the session is over. The analyst's *après-coup* understanding between sessions is an essential part of the analysis even though the interpretation can no longer be made and enables the process to develop over time. The patient also resignifies the session between sessions, either in the direction of greater self-reflection or, on the contrary, with increased projection and paranoia. While the patient may be struggling with hatred of the analyst who has been in 'the other room' (Britton, 1998) between sessions, the patient returns to an analyst who has had time to process and sometimes resignify the meaning of the session. A concrete version of this is, of course, supervision and we know that the good use of supervision does not reside in making the interpretation which the supervisor would have made the next day, but in the supervisee's own developing understanding. The analyst's ability to continue the psychic work of the sessions between sessions will be important to the analysis and to the patient becoming able to live in the spatio-temporal world.

With Freud's basic discovery of unconscious processes came his understanding of a different type of thinking, which does not abide by the usual time and spatial requirements that we normally take for granted. This type of thinking, which he called 'primary process thinking', was evidenced in dreams and led to his writing about the 'timelessness of the unconscious'. More recently, there has been a preference for speaking of a different kind of temporality, rather than of no temporality in the unconscious (Hartocollis, 1980). Green coined the term 'shattered time' (*le temps éclaté*) to describe this other kind of time as seen prototypically in dreams. He writes,

The dream 'clearly indicates' the existence of shattered time', that is a notion of time which has very little to do with the idea of an orderly succession according to the tripartite past/present/future. Everything in my dream is pure present (2002a, p. 1).

French psychoanalysts emphasise the analytic aim of freeing the associative process with its lack of concern for ordered succession in time. This becomes not a means to an end but the end in itself. It is this freeing of the associative process which is seen as the cornerstone of the analytic endeavour (Donnet, 2001). A number of French psychoanalysts, following Lacan, are largely working with Freud's topographical model and see the lifting of repression as the aim of psychoanalysis, hence the emphasis on the primary processes

⁹Bion states that, in the paranoid-schizoid phase, the question 'why?' cannot be solved because 'why?' has, through guilt, been split off: 'Problems, the solution of which depends upon an awareness of causation, cannot therefore be stated, let alone solved. This produces a situation in which the patient appears to have no problems except those posed by the existence of analyst and patient' (1959, p. 312).

of free association with its atemporal aspects. I want to suggest that their emphasis on *après-coup*, which rests on gathering disparate elements of past and present, reintroduces the importance of temporality, both retrospective and progressive.

While British psychoanalysts have been talking *après-coup* without always knowing it, French psychoanalysts have been, sometimes in spite of themselves, bringing in developmental time through attaching importance to the *après-coup*, since for the continual restructuring of experience to take place, developmental time needs to be tolerated psychically. Drawing attention to retrospective time is important for freeing psychoanalysis from the deterministic model it has sometimes had, but the subtlety of psychoanalysis rests on the paradoxical interconnection of the two movements, forward and retrospective, which it is aiming to free.

Winnicott's notion of the fear of the breakdown which has already taken place can be enlarged to describe the way in which the analytic experience 'becomes' the trauma. Notions of representation, narrative, constructions are relevant in the context of such things as 'nameless dread', which are given a representation (*après-coup*) in the analysis but do not exclude the role of the past. In my clinical descriptions, I brought out the way in which the patients were fighting off the trauma by dismantling the development of meaning.

Translations of summary

Zeit und Nachträglichkeit. Die Autorin erforscht die unterschiedliche Zeitlichkeit der Entwicklungszeit, der Nachträglichkeit (*après-coup*) und der von ihr beschriebenen „Nachhallzeit“. Sie untersucht die paradoxe Zeitlichkeit des „Hier und Jetzt“ und zeigt, dass es sich dabei nicht um reine Gegenwart handelt. Auf der Mikroebene von Sitzungsmaterial beschreibt sie, dass voranschreitende und retrospektive Zeit immer zusammengehen und einander wechselseitig voraussetzen.

El tiempo y el *après-coup*. La autora explora las diferentes temporalidades del tiempo lineal, del *après-coup* y de lo que ella denomina "tiempo de reverberación". También considera la paradójica temporalidad del "aquí y ahora" mostrando que esta no es puro presente, y describe, al micronivel del material de sesiones, como los tiempos progresivo y retrospectivo van inherentemente juntos, siendo un requisito del otro.

Temps et *après-coup*. L'auteur explore les différentes temporalités du temps développemental, de l'*après-coup* et de ce qu'elle appelle le « temps de réverbération ». Elle examine la temporalité paradoxale de l' « ici et maintenant », en montrant qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un pur présent, et décrit au micro-niveau du matériel d'une séance comment les temps progressif et rétrospectif évoluent inextricablement en commun, l' un constituant un présupposé de l'autre.

Il tempo e l' *après-coup*. L'autrice esplora le diverse temporalità del tempo evolutivo, dell '*après-coup* e di quello che chiama "tempo di riverbero". Essa prende in considerazione la temporalité paradossale del "qui e ora" mostrando che non si tratta di un puro presente e describe, al microlivello del materiale delle sedute, come il tempo progressivo e retrospettivo vadano intrinsecamente insieme, essendo l'uno requisito dell' altro.

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