

**THE MEANING OF THE ABSENCE OF THE FATHER IN THE**  
**DEVELOPMENT OF INFANTS**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The research explores the meaning and concomitant effects of the absence of the father in the development of very young children by observing three cases of single parent families where the fathers were continuously and permanently absent. A comparison group was also used. The exploration rests upon a minimum of pre-suppositions; we are not pre-supposing at the outset that a single mother household inevitably leads to pathology. Since the research investigates meaning the focus of attention is on the internal worlds of baby and mother.

The research utilises the psychoanalytic theories of fatherhood of Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Wisdom, Ogden and Gaddini. Interpretation of behaviour observed draws upon psychoanalytic theories of inference and meaning, especially the models of the mind used in the clinical work of Klein, Bion and Meltzer.

The method used in the research was a modification of the Tavistock Method of Infant Observation as initiated by E Bick, the central psychoanalytic concepts used being those of transference and countertransference.

The responses of the different members of the families to the presence of a male observer was a focal point of the research and illuminated the meaning of the father's absence and the father's role in early development.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES**

# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES**

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## 1.1 Aim

The aim of this research is to illuminate the role of the father in the family by exploring the meaning and concomitant effects of the *absence* of the father in the development of very young children, and in the situation of the mother insofar as it affects such development. Three cases of single parent families were observed intensively. For purposes of comparison and further insight a second group of three cases of two parent families was also included. In this group attention is directed particularly to those effects *prima facie* related to the *presence* of the father.

The role of the father is therefore explored both *negatively* and *positively*.

The aim is to explore with a minimum of presuppositions; we are not presupposing at the outset that a single mother household inevitably leads to pathology. Since we are investigating meaning the focus of attention will be on the internal worlds of baby and mother.

## 1.2 Background

This thesis arose out of a persistent preoccupation with a range of questions regarding the role of the father in the family.

In our age, does the father *have* a meaningful, distinct and irreplaceable role in the family, or is he no more than an undifferentiated wage earner and an extra pair of 'caring' hands?

Are there specific substantial differences between men and women in relation to the upbringing of infants and children?

If there are such specific substantial differences do they lead to correspondingly substantial differences in the children?

Again, if there are such differences are they innate (biological) and therefore essentially invariant and unalterable; alternatively are they largely cultural and therefore amenable to change; or, as commonsense would have it, some mixture of the two?

If a mixture, how can we draw a map of the boundaries which constrain the region of



**constructive cultural variation?**

**These preoccupations are somewhat vague and general, and also entirely unoriginal, being shared by a large proportion of the men and women of our time in the Western World. I had not always thought about these matters, since I grew up in Israel before coming to live in England, and in Israel the set of characteristic preoccupations is different. In that country there is much less questioning (because much more consensus) about the roles of men and women in the family, and about how to bring up children.**

**Preoccupation may be a necessary precursor of understanding, but it does not lead to it inevitably; nor does such preoccupation always generate researchable questions. It may as easily lead to obsession, prejudice or a repetitious mental treadmill.**

**A researchable question can sometimes be generated by articulating a problem, subdividing it into discrete parts, and then proceeding in the usual way, i.e. hypothesising, observing, testing, etc.**

### **1.3 Methodological Preliminaries**

**We could proceed like this:–**

- **(F) What is the role of the father in the family?**

**We can gauge role by both positive and negative procedures, i.e. estimate the effects of an entity by observing a situation where the entity (the father) is present (P), and where the entity is absent (A). The first subdivision is therefore as follows:–**

- **(FP) The role of the father as revealed by observing the effects of what he, the father, does and is; i.e. take a two parent family.**
- **(FA) The role of the father as revealed by observing the effects when he is absent;**

i.e. take a single mother family;

A next natural subdivision is to consider effects in relation to the different persons of the family:—

- (FPM) Effects (of the present father) in relation to the mother, i.e. concentrate observations on the mother.
- (FPC) Effects (of the present father) in relation to the children., i.e. concentrate observations on the children.
  
- (FAM) Effects (of the absent father) in relation to the mother....observe mother.
- (FAC) Effects (of the absent father) in relation to the children....observe children.

#### **1.4 Observation**

Next consider the notion of 'observation'. What do we mean here, and precisely, by this word? Subdividing this question:—

- What is the *setting* of the observation?
  - on the one hand more or less natural and unconstrained (within the family home);
  - on the other hand more or less controlled and contrived (we could say 'experimental')
  
- What is the *instrument* of observation?
  - on the one hand a person only, without special observational apparatus, and interacting naturally with other persons of the family;
  - on the other hand apparatus only, say a continuously recording video camera;

- alternatively a combination of person and apparatus: a studiously neutral observer ('just ignore me....forget I'm here') with clipboard and tape recorder.
- How are the observations *recorded*?
  - a video cassette;
  - an acoustic cassette;
  - notes on a pre-designed schedule, taken down at the time;
  - unstructured notes, taken down at the time;
  - unstructured notes, set down afterwards from memory.
- To what degree does the observer *participate* in the life of the family?
- How is the *timing* of observation structured?

### 1.5 Behaviour, Meaning, Explanation

Consider three simple events:—

(1) One observes a certain motorist consistently keep to the left of the road. This is a behaviour. It can be described as a *social* fact (not psychological or biological, say) since it derives from a prescriptive social rule.

(2) Accidentally touching a hot stove I draw back quickly. This is a *biological* fact, the activation of a reflex;

(3) Two young men meet in the street. They greet each other effusively and talk for some time. This is a *personal* fact rooted, we presume, in personal history.

In the first case the dependent variable (motoring behaviour) can be expressed objectively and operationally and is simple to observe, and explanatory variables

(prescriptive regulations and law-abidingness, say) are reasonably transparent. The two kinds of variable can be linked by a simple causal chain. We are dealing with an instance, not a unique event.

In the second case (the hot stove) we are also dealing with a pure instance, and the causal chain is even simpler. Karl Popper's falsification criterion would apply.

In the third case the situation is substantially different. The methodology is well understood by everyone; nonetheless it is quite complex. The event itself is not in any way mysterious..... we surmise that they are good friends. We are not at a loss for an explanation, but this explanation (to be more than superficial, i.e. to go beyond the mere identification of an instance of greeting customs between friends) ends with a causal chain but begins with particular private knowledge. The causal chain commences only after the event 'becoming friends': this event itself is unique, a matter for personal historical illumination. The diagram of explanation is therefore:-

[Illuminative personal history (unique)]...followed by...[Causal chain (instance)].

It would seem inevitable that any investigation of the role of the father in the family which aspired to illumination, although it might derive valuable insights from the social survey, the psychology laboratory and the clinic, would have to use also the more phenomenological and case-study methods implied in the discussion of Case(3) above.

### 1.6 Dependent and Explanatory Variables

I have trained as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and worked for several years in Child Guidance Clinics. Naturally this informs my thinking when considering the variables which might be significant in regard to the role of the father (or the results of the absence of such a role).

We can divide the variables (as they relate to mother and child) into two main groups: which we can categorise loosely as internal and external. Below are some examples.

**Internal (Mother):-**            Personal abilities/resources (education, skills, temperament)  
   Personal tone (happiness/depression, robustness)  
   Inner world (parental objects)

**External (Mother):-**            Social opportunities (network of friends and relatives)  
   Material circumstances (housing, household finance).

**Internal (Child):-**            Oedipal resolution  
   Separation (from parents)

**External (Child):-**            Quality of schooling  
   Opportunities for play (facilities, friends, relatives)

### **1.7 Hypotheses**

Classic psychoanalytic theory holds that the father is a key figure in the development of the child's individuation, its separation from the parents. My main early hypothesis was therefore that, in the absence of a father, there would be clear signs of separation difficulty and, accordingly, in my early observations ( of the three children of single mothers ) I was continually on the lookout for signs of this kind.

The evidence was not encouraging. Two out of the three children (Mark, Mina) showed no overt signs of separation difficulty.

Abandoning this hypothesis I concentrated intently on the observational material with, as far as I was capable, a minimum of preconceptions, trying to gain a more profound

understanding of the inner worlds of the children, as far as I could interpret them.. What, if anything, was going on? And were there elements common to the three which would appear to be related to their situation as children without a father? Later I observed the three children of the two parent families. Finally I came back to my original hypothesis and reclaimed it, but with substantial modifications; however, we shall reserve an exposition of these modifications to the final chapter.

(see Chapter 10: Conclusions Section 10.4 p 381).

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE AND THEORIES**

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE AND THEORIES**

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## 2.1. The Genesis and Meaning of Behaviour

This research is based (centrally, but not exclusively) on the interpretation of behaviour drawing on psychoanalytic theory. One could raise the question: Why a psychoanalytic interpretation rather than, for example, a cognitive psychological interpretation?

To such a question my answer is roughly as follows:

- a) There do exist a variety of possible interpretations.
- b) The psychoanalytical interpretation is, as I shall be arguing, both illuminating and substantial. (I shall not claim that it is completely comprehensive).
- c) For the present I leave open the question whether or not other interpretations are comparably illuminating. They may well be complementary, and some will be considered below

It is necessary now to turn to psychoanalytic theories that concentrate upon elucidating the meaning of an experience.

## 2.2 The Growth of the Psychoanalytic Perspective

In this chapter the explicit and implicit models of the mind utilised in the clinical work of Freud, Klein and Bion are explicated, as developed by D Meltzer (1978, 1967, 1984). These models link with one another, forming a continuous line of development: from the neurophysiological model of Freud to the geographical model of Klein, to the epistemological model of Bion. These models develop a vision of an apparatus for mental life which embraces meaning and emotion and where understanding is transformed into personality structure.

### 2.21: Freud

Sigmund Freud trained as a physician, a neurologist and research worker in neurophysiology. He looked on mind and brain as phenomenologically identical and attempted to create an explanatory science of the mind using a neurophysiological model. This model drew on comparative anatomy, embryology and archaeology, backed by the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics. This model of the mind (Freud 1895)

imposed on him a view of mental life which he used as a basis for his scientific work, to a greater or lesser extent, for the rest of his life. He viewed the mind as bound like a servant to the body and its needs (Id), and thus engaged upon finding means to gratify these needs (by the Ego) without battling with the environment, human and non-human.

Psychoanalysis took its present form when Freud gave specific significance to the term 'metapsychology' as a special province of psychoanalysis, examining the human personality from four viewpoints: its development (the genetic aspect), its structure, its mechanisms of operation (the dynamic aspect), and its disposition of psychic 'energy' (economic aspect). In this paper on metapsychology Freud introduced another agency that the personality has to satisfy - the agency of the conscience, of the Superego. His picture of the personality is quite a gloomy one. He pictured the Ego as serving three masters - the Id (the instincts), the outside world and the Superego. Using all the tricks and devices (mechanisms of defence) to overcome or trick these three masters, the Ego seeks to find some kind of balance, a peaceful co-existence.

Later on when Freud (1920) formulated the theory of the Life and Death Instincts, it appeared that the very purpose of life was to die peacefully. Only in his late papers on fetishism and masochism (1927, 1924), was Freud mainly concerned with the meaning of personal life and less concerned with the distribution of energy and the attainment of homeostasis.

At the very end of his life, Freud (1938) did make an attempt to change the concept of a one-to-one neuroanatomical equation of mind and brain, thus trying to transform himself from a neurophysiological psychologist into a phenomenological one.

Freud's (1912) most important clinical discovery was the phenomenon of the transference. This concept became the focal point of psychoanalytic investigation and remains the

essence of the psychoanalytic method as a technique for exploring and investigating the human mind. In Freud's own words, there is transference because ...

'The unconscious impulses do not want to be remembered in the way the treatment desires them to be, but endeavour to reproduce themselves in accordance with the timelessness of the unconscious and its capacity for hallucination. Just as happens in dreams the patient regards the products of the awakening of his unconscious impulses as contemporaneous and real, he seeks to put his passions (both love and hate) into action without taking any account of the real situation. The doctor tries to compel him to fit these emotional impulses into the nexus of the treatment and of his life history, to submit them to intellectual consideration and to understand them in the light of their psychical value' (p. 108).

Even before the 1912 paper, Freud had already made explicit his conviction that the analyst's capacity to understand the unconscious phantasy and the emotion bound up in the patient's transference depended on the analyst's contact with his own unconscious reaction to the patient's emotional impulses. Freud referred to this response of the analyst as countertransference (Freud 1910).

In Freud's own words:

'We have become aware of the counter-transference which arises as a result of the patient's influence on his (the analyst's) unconscious feelings and we are almost inclined to insist that he shall recognise this countertransference in himself and overcome it'. (S.E.XI, p.144). Still, because of his neurophysiological hydraulic model of the mind, Freud was bound to view transference as a repetition of the past. This was accompanied by a view of dreams as brain activities supporting the neurophysiological process of sleep. Although he used dreams as a rich source of information to obtain a deeper understanding

of the personality, he could not assign to them a dynamic thinking function. (1900). Even when he developed the concept of the Superego (1923) and spoke of internalisation, he could not come to a concept of an internal world except in an allegorical way, because in his basic model he did not have a place to locate it (Meltzer 1983). Under the influence of Darwinian theory, Freud treated emotion as a relic of primitive forms of communication and did not assign it a function in itself, again as a result of his basic model.

## 2.22: Klein

These limitations of Freud's model of the mind highlight the significance of Klein's work. Early in her career, as a result of listening naively to young children talking in their psychotherapy about the inside of their own and of their mothers' bodies, (Klein, 1932) she made a discovery which was a revolutionary addition to Freud's model of the mind. That is, that people live not only in an external world, but in a parallel internal world which is as real and definite a place of life as the external world. (Segal, 1981, 1973; Meltzer, 1973). This internal world is peopled in the child's conscious and unconscious phantasies by good and bad figures with whom the child is in a constant state of conflict and alliance, ever shifting. These many figures are linked to the parental figures and to various parts of the body. Klein (1926, 1929, 1932) referred to these figures collectively as 'early Superego'. Out of this description grew the concept of psychic reality (Klein, 1958; Meltzer, 1973) : the reality of the internal world, the place where relationships between the different figures are taking place and where the meaning of life is generated for deployment in the outside world. This gives a new significance to the concept of phantasy; that is, that unconscious phantasies are transactions *actually taking place* in the internal world rather than constituting merely a way to reduce Id tension in the system (Riviere, 1936; Isaacs, 1948).

Dreaming could not be regarded any longer as a mechanism for reducing tension in order to maintain sleep (of course it could be that as well) but as pictures of dream life (Meltzer,

1983) that is going on constantly, awake or asleep. These transactions are defined as dreams when we are asleep, and as unconscious phantasies when we are awake (Hinshelwood, 1989).

Klein claimed that these internal relations forming the psychic reality start with the very beginning of post-natal life. She repeatedly stressed the extreme goodness and badness of the objects in the internal world as they are experienced by the infant. It is an immoderate world, a world of melodrama. She described a picture of the internal world during the first few months of life in which there is a state of constant war between love and hate, between good and evil, that is accompanied by feelings of great fear, pain and rage, that threaten the infant's desire to live. She termed this mental organisation as the paranoid schizoid position (1946). According to Klein (1946), if the infant is to survive in a reasonably healthy way, it must deal with this violent extreme state by a mechanism she termed 'splitting', whereby the infant divides itself and its objects very severely into idealised good and persecuting bad segments. The idealised good parts of the self attempt to ally themselves with the idealised good objects, that is, with the feeding breast of the mother or its representative.

The fundamental alliance, the mother-child idealised, forms the prototype for the development of love, trust, gratitude and hope. This idealised relationship is constantly threatened, both externally and internally. Envy, pain, disappointment or shock, each attacks the trust in the goodness and strength of the object. Every separation brings loneliness and then jealousy which attacks gratitude. The infant's envy of the goodness, beauty, strength and competence of the object works against the infant's love towards its object. Any sign of wear and weakness undermines the infant's hope. (Klein 1957, 1952, 1932). In the paranoid-schizoid position, all safety against persecution, pain and fear of death is felt by the infant to derive from the strength and services of these idealised objects. In this organisation of the personality the good objects are valued, loved or even worshipped, but primarily for their services. The main characteristic of the infant's relation

to his/her good objects is selfishness and they are perceived from the perspective of his/her self-interest. The infant cannot experience concern for the good objects at this stage. Klein, (1935, 1936) following Abraham (1924), termed this state of relating to the object as relationship with a part object. The mother in this stage is not perceived as a whole person with whom the infant has a relationship. Rather, the relationship is with an anatomical physiological structure and its functions for the infant.

Where the primary splitting and idealisation of the infant self and object have taken place satisfactorily, where the parental services are reasonably adequate, where jealousy, envy and intolerance of mental and physical pain are not too excessive, the infant will arrive, at about four to six months of age, at what Klein (1935, 1940) termed the depressive position.

As development progresses, the infant develops the capacity to perceive people as whole objects. This is not just a capacity of the perceptual apparatus, but mainly an emotional accomplishment. At this stage the infant is physically and emotionally mature enough to integrate its emotionally fragmented perceptions of the mother, bringing together the separated good and bad images that it had previously experienced. When such part objects are brought together as a whole, they threaten to form a *contaminated damaged* whole object because it is perceived by the infant as an object that has a mixture of intentions. At the same time, due to the infant's greater integration, there is an awareness that the object which is so hated, feared and attacked is the same object which the infant had idealised. This new relationship to the mother is the core of the depressive position and is the source of many painful phantasies as to what had happened to her. The mother may seem to be depleted of her goodness, or to have been contaminated with badness, or to have been harmed, damaged or brutally mutilated. All these phantasies are based on the infant's awareness of his/her internal reality, the kinds of impulses s/he knows in him/herself. This recognition leads the infant to an intense feeling of responsibility towards his object, as well as a great sorrow for attacks and damage it feels it has caused

to the object, resulting in depressive anxiety (Klein, 1940). The infant has to contend with the fact that s/he hates, with the most paranoid intensity, the mother whom s/he can now see is the same person s/he loved for feeding, caring and loving him/her. Out of this complicated emotional constellation comes a new capacity to love. Concern, sorrow and love for the whole object are for the object itself and not for the gratifications it gives. In the depressive position, the object is loved in spite of its bad aspects, whereas in the paranoid-schizoid position, awareness of the bad aspects changes the good object abruptly into a persecutor. The depressive anxiety and the concern and love for the whole object mobilise the infant towards reparation (Klein, 1929, 1933, 1940, 1945). The infant's need to restore the damaged object in phantasy leads him/her to a phantasy of putting right the effects of this damage. Primarily it is a repair of the internal world that is intended through repairing the external. Though one aspect of the driving anxiety for reparation is the need to ensure the child's own survival through maintaining a mother to support and care for it, it is mainly the concern for the loved object, a pining for it, which is the driving force for reparation. Reparation is a phantasy which may be acted out with external objects which represent the damaged internal object. Thus it is a force for constructive action in the external world supplementing a love relationship. The concepts of the paranoid schizoid position and the depressive position help us to see how children struggle to understand their failures and why they need to try again and again. At every juncture of an infant's and child's life s/he is presented with the dual problem of renouncing old services and developing new skills. At every juncture s/he must decide again whether to go forward or not, and if forward, for what reason; enlightened self-interest, fear, competitiveness, or concern for his/her good objects.

Klein (1946) described the two mechanisms of *splitting* and *projective identification*. These two mechanisms describe the ways in which the mind destroys its own primal unity. She defined projective identification as the prototype of aggressive object relationships, representing, she claimed, an anal attack on an object by means of forcing split-off parts of the ego into the other object in order to take over its contents or to control it. It occurs,

she also says, from the beginning of life. It is a phantasy remote from consciousness that entails a belief that certain aspects of the self are located elsewhere. As a consequence there is a depletion and weakened sense of self and identity, which may lead to depersonalisation; feelings of being lost or a sense of imprisonment.

The introduction of these concepts implies that a person lives multiple lives in greater or lesser harmony and integration with one another. To the duality of internal and external worlds in which a person lives she added the regions inside objects that various parts of the ego might inhabit.

From a historical perspective, it seems that Klein transformed Freud's creation from a Baconian science aiming at explanations and hoping to arrive at absolute laws, into a descriptive science, more like history, observing and describing phenomena that are infinite in their possibilities because they are phenomena of imagination and not the finitely constrained events deriving from the distribution of the mental energy of the brain (libido). The geographic aspect of the model (Meltzer, 1984) transformed some concepts of Freud's model. In Freud's model narcissism is a state in which the libido is withdrawn from the object back to the subject's self.

Freud (1914) identified several aspects of narcissism:

- (1) primary narcissism as a stage early in infancy before there is a recognition by the infant of an object, and when the infant's own ego is taken as the object of libidinal love;
- (2) secondary narcissism, a regression from an object relationship which has become a disappointment through either loss of the object, or some kind of slight by the object, back to a narcissistic love of the ego;
- (3) narcissistic object-relations, when the ego loves an object (insofar as the object resembles the ego).

Narcissism in Klein's model is not a theory about the nature of the libido and its attachment to the body, but a social and organisational concept. She views the phenomenology of narcissism as arising from the relationships of the parts of the child's personality to one another in psychic reality.



The geographical dimension alters the concept of transference. Instead of transference being seen as relics of the past, it is viewed in Klein's model as externalisation of the immediate present of the internal situation, to be studied as psychic reality.

The concepts of the paranoid schizoid position and the depressive position introduce values into the psychoanalytic model of the mind, that is, self-interest versus concern for the object. Klein describes a mind that is concerned with values and meaning, that oscillates throughout life in its relationships between paranoid schizoid and depressive states of mind, that lives in at least two worlds, the internal and the external. It is in the internal world of relationships that meaning is generated and deployed to relationships in the external world. The elaboration of the experiences of the internal world, of unconscious phantasies as thinking processes where meaning is generated, brings *emotionality* into the centre of the model (Meltzer, 1983; Waddell, 1987). Emotionality in Klein's model is not viewed as an archaic manifestation of primitive communication but as the *very core of meaning*. In Klein's model of the mind the meaning is always and only the meaning of relationships. Klein investigated only the relations of the different parts of the self (the different internal figures) to one another and to internal and external objects. She did not investigate the separate ego functions (thinking, memory, etc.).

### 2.23: Bion

In his work with schizophrenic patients and their thinking difficulties, Bion started to investigate the conditions in which particular ego functions are disordered. Bion (1950, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959) traced Klein's concepts of splitting and projective identification to the separate ego functions such as thinking, memory, attention, verbalisation, judgment and action. He described how the mind could attack itself by splitting off a particular mental function and projecting parts of the personality containing these isolated functions into other objects. Such objects of projective identification could then be experienced as being able to perform these split off functions, while what was left of the self could no longer perform them. He then began to investigate and elaborate a concept of thinking. He separated thoughts and the elaboration of thoughts from

thinking as the transformation of these thoughts. He then modified Klein's emphasis on the baby's relationship to the breast and stressed the mother's main role as a modulator of mental pain which enables the baby to proceed with its development. He emphasised development of the mind as a complicated process that has to be structured every step of the way. According to Bion the mind is built bit by bit, as experiences are digested. In his view the mother has to perform mental functions which the baby can then learn to perform for itself by internalising her. He formulated it in terms of the baby's relationship to the breast: essentially the baby, being in a state of confusion and having emotional experiences about which it cannot think, projects distressed parts of itself into the breast. The mother and her mind, experienced by the baby as her breast, has to perform the function of thinking for the baby. The mother returns to the baby those disturbed parts of itself in a state that enables thinking, and particularly dreaming, to come into existence. He (1962) characterised this process as *alpha function*. The mother performs the alpha function for her baby by what Bion termed *reverie*: the mother's state of mind of calm receptiveness to take in the infant's own feelings. Reverie is an unconscious state of mind in which the mother is able to offer the infant the resources of her own interior, her own internal objects, to serve in receiving the infant's anxious projections and modulating them through thinking. The baby's capacity to think depends not only on the mother's capacity for reverie, but also on her availability as an object for introjection. The theory of alpha function is closely linked to the notion of containment (Bion, 1962) which derives from Klein's description of projective identification. The infant ego is enlarged through introjection of an object that can contain its experiences and can think about them. Implicit in this theory is a notion of internal and external spaces, into which things can be received or extruded.

Whereas with Klein the breast stood as a metaphor for maternal functions such as feeding, gratifying, with Bion it stands as a metaphor for the mind. It is with the experience of the present object rather than the absent object, as in Klein's theory, that Bion is mainly concerned.

Bion (1963) next elaborated his theory into a grid to describe how thoughts grow in complexity, abstraction and sophistication in the mind so that they can be used for manipulation in thinking. The basic level of thoughts proper in his grid is the level with which Klein's work was concerned, the level of dreams and dream thoughts. He also suggested that there may be a parallel growth in the mind of something that is in the service of anti-thought, of misunderstanding, a kind of jamming and/or disinformation which is opposed to the discovery of truth, and which is essentially a system for generating lies, a negative grid. Bion attributed these functions to the good internalised breast (thinking) and the destructive parts of personality (lies). Thus in Bion's description of the thinking process, parts of the personality that are bound in dependence and love relationship to the good object are constantly being pulled away by lies to abandon their relationship to the truth. For Bion, truth is the nourishment of the mind and lies are its poison. Given the truth (about anything significant in one's life), the mind is able to grow and develop. Being poisoned by lies leads to mental illness, a kind of death of the mind. Thus development of the mind derives from intimate relationships in which the important events are emotional experiences. Bion's work places emotion at the very heart of meaning. If the mind is to grow and develop, the emotional experience of the intimate relationship has to be thought about and understood. For Bion the emotion is the meaning of the experience and everything that evolves in the mind through alpha function, such as dreaming, painting pictures, writing music, the play of children. All of these are representations of meaning. The creative processes of dreaming and children's play generate meaning that can then be deployed to relationships in the external world. Our external relationships derive meaning from what exists in our internal world and have a certain transference quality.

#### 2.24: Bick

Ideas developed by other psychoanalysts will be utilised in the discussion chapter to elucidate the meaning of the observed behaviour. Bick (1968) noticed a specific phenomenon in the mother-infant interaction which concerned skin stimulation. Bick

thought that skin contact is the most prominent element in the earliest relationship and in the earliest introjections of the ego. In observing mother-infant interactions, Bick described two opposite states of mind for the infant, either a feeling of the infant being in a state of coherence, or the opposite, a feeling of dissolution, inco-ordination, annihilation. Bick inferred these states of mind from the infant's behaviour: restless movements, crying, screaming that occur typically when the baby is undressed, when its face is washed, when it is held precariously, or when feeding is interrupted. Reduction in the apparent lack of co-ordination and distress occur typically when the infant is carried, dressed, wrapped in a blanket and is being fed. These clearly distinguished states of the infant are held by Bick to correspond to later states of mind which she identified as the feeling of dissolution versus the feeling of containment. For Bick, the primary role of the mother during the first few weeks of the infant's life is to give the infant a physical/emotional experience of keeping its parts of the personality together, as they are felt by the infant to have no binding force amongst themselves. Therefore they must be held together externally by the mother. The infant experiences this function of the mother passively through the skin sensation and identifies it with his/her skin. Thus the skin is perceived by the infant to function as a boundary container. The nipple in the baby's mouth is a similar experience for the infant. That is, the mouth represents a hole in the boundary which is then closed by the nipple. Moreover, gaining the nipple in his/her mouth, the infant has an experience of acquiring such an object. With this first introjection comes the sense of space into which objects can be introjected. That is, once the infant has introjected such a primary containing object s/he can have a sense of an internal space.

Bick (1968) described a situation where the containing object was not established properly and the infant has to take defensive steps to avoid the need for a passive experience of the external object. Thus the infant creates a substitute for that skin container by what Bick described as the formation of a second skin through which the dependence on the object is replaced by pseudo-independence. This often takes the form of a hyperactive muscular activity seen in babies and children. Meltzer (1975) has stressed that failure in developing a sense of internal space leads to a

tendency to relate to objects in a two-dimensional way without depth. The central quality of this type of object relationship is adhesion, as the child tries to stick on to an object which is not capable of containing or is simply not available for the child to be contained. He (Meltzer 1975) termed this state of affair as adhesive identification. In this constellation the child is not capable of internalising experiences, thus turning them into an integral part of his/her personality. Therefore adhesive identification entails a behaviour constituted of imitation and conformism.

### 2.25: Play

As this research is based on observations of two-year-old babies of single mothers, it is necessary to refer to some psychoanalytic perspectives on play.

Freud's interest in play emphasised the importance of the child mastering his/her internal world by repeating through play an internal event which is related to an external experience. Inherent is a view of play as a way of turning a passive experience into an active one. In the game, the child 'hands on the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates and in this way revenges himself on a substitute' (Freud, 1920, p. 17). This aspect was taken up by Waelder (1933) and Anna Freud (1936).

Klein developed the method of analysing children based on observing their play, which she analysed as if it were comparable to the free associations of adults and to dreams. She viewed both play and free associations as symbolic expressions of the content of the mind. She regarded the urge to play as composed of a number of ingredients:

- 1) The human mind thinks from the outset in terms of objects in relation to each other and to the subject. In play, children turn their toys into persons, imaginary and real, who are of importance in their actual life, and they are concerned with the relations between those personified objects.

2) The child seeks relief from disasters of his internal world through externalising the persecuting situations into the external world.

3) Part of the child's natural development is to seek new objects as substitutes for earlier ones, that is the mother to whom in his/her phantasy s/he caused damage by her/his attacks. Toys and playmates are one of the forms of practising symbolisation of this kind. The turning to new objects is driven by the conflicts with the early object, so that respite is gained by finding a new object, a symbol representing the original object. Klein (1926, 1929) thought that these processes are unconscious and represent the mind of the child struggling with difficulties posed by its impulses and its objects. She viewed play as an important aspect of creativity, especially the element of search for new objects towards which some of the impulses can be turned, thereby diminishing the internal tensions and conflicts.

Winnicott (1971) viewed play as a joyful activity included within the category of transitional phenomena and taking place within the transitional space. Although he has never defined this concept it is usually regarded as a space of illusion between child and mother which is perceived by the child neither as me nor not me (Davis and Wallbridge, 1981). He emphasised the joyful element in play as central in order to distinguish his views from the Kleinian stress on destructiveness, which views play as a serious business driven by unconscious painful and fearful phantasies.

### 2.3 Other Perspectives

Psychoanalysis is of course not the only discipline which has concerned itself with the growth of the infant as a person. Developmental psychology has provided a plethora of detailed research findings bearing on infant capacities, both the particulars of perceptual development ( e.g. milestones in the genesis of perceptual abilities) and the more synthetic competencies of interpersonal relations.

The strength of this work lies in the precision and objectivity of the findings. The limitations tend to be of two kinds:—

- (a) a restriction, in the main, to one strand only of early life, to those states of so-called 'alert inactivity' in the infant;
- (b) along with this a degree of inattention to what psychoanalysis takes as a fundamental fact, viz. that personal life is , from birth, saturated with affect and meaning.

Kleinian analysis necessarily presupposes a highly developed range of sensibilities in the infant from birth. Recent experimental work in perception has underpinned this presupposition by demonstrating, among other things, the exquisite timing and acoustical abilities of very young infants. (Bertoncini et al., 1987, 1988; Clarkson et al. ,1989, 1991) Stern(1977, 1985), has put together much of the work on perceptual capacities to give a vivid depiction of the life of the very young infant. He is well versed in both psychoanalysis and developmental psychology, and has considered in detail some of the ways in which each discipline can contribute to the refinement , modification and validation of the other. For example, although accepting the usefulness of Melanie Klein's concepts of the paranoid schizoid and depressive positions he agrees with Meltzer(1988) that the evidence is at best equivocal that the former position arises inevitably before the latter.

There is also a considerable literature on children and families from the sociological viewpoint. We shall consider some of this literature later when we consider specifically the role of the father (Section 2.4 below) .

## 2.4 Role of the Father : The Psychoanalytic Viewpoint

It seems that Freud was leaving out an immensely important part of development. Insofar as he considered the child's early development between the period of zero to five years he leaned towards the influence of the mother. While Klein's clinical theories about the first year of life are very important, it seems to me that they do not include overtly a theory about the role of the father. While Klein's followers extended her theory in useful ways, the same criticism of Klein's theory applies to them. Other writers do give the father a role, but none give him a positive shaping role, as a person in his own right. Wisdom (1976) is the only psychoanalyst who tries to construct a theory about the role of the father in early childhood. I think that some such theory is needed to account more fully for children's psychological development. It is hoped that this research will contribute to this. Since this research explores the impact of the father's absence on the child's experience from a psychoanalytic perspective it is necessary to turn to the psychoanalytic theories of fatherhood. The theories are described below.

### 2.41 Freud and Fatherhood

In searching the classic psychoanalytic literature on the role of the father during the infant's early years, very little is found. The important person is the mother. Father comes into his own only when the children reach the phallic-Oedipal stage of development around the age of five. It is true that Freud at one point talks of a 'direct and immediate identification' of the boy with the father during the first year of life, but he never develops further these ideas. [Freud, 1923 ('The Ego and the Id')]. Burlingham (1973) tries to magnify the significance of the occasional isolated remarks of Freud about the father during the child's infancy and from them extracts the father's role in Freud's writing as: (1) The father as an object of love and identification. (2) The father as giving bodily care. (3) The father as a protector. (4) The father as a powerful god-like being. However her arguments are quite unconvincing.



Freud saw neurotic troubles as stemming from conflicts produced around the genital Oedipus complex and this for Freud was the time that the father entered the scene. Up until then the baby enjoyed the bliss of his relationship with the mother and all was serene until the dyadic relationship turned into a triangular one with the intrusion of the rival father.

We shall not discuss Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex because it refers specifically to children older than those observed in this research. However, there is a variant theory, that of Melanie Klein, which locates the onset of the Oedipal stage much earlier. The theory is described below.

#### 2.42 M. Klein and her Followers

(I will turn now from the classical theory to the Kleinian). Klein has extended the range of childhood psychology, commencing with birth instead of age five. In her theory, the father appears implicitly from the beginning of life (Klein 1928, 1932, 1935, 1936).

Klein pointed out that there are primitive forms of the Oedipal complex before genital primacy and that pre-genital does not mean necessarily pre-Oedipal. She saw the father, the real one as well as the phantasies about him, as being important in the child's life from the beginning. She described the Oedipal phantasies of children younger than three years old, and the intense anxieties of the child associated with them. She claimed that Oedipal phantasies give rise to fears of primitive persecutory figures, maternal, paternal, or as a combined figure, often at the very centre of phobias and nightmares. She described the figure of combined sexual parents as an important factor in psychotic anxieties. She thought that the phantasy combined figure is partially a denial of the parental intercourse, combining the two into one monstrous figure, and also a projection of the child's hostility to that intercourse, making it into a particularly threatening figure.

Klein considered that the Oedipus complex starts in the first year of life and is fundamentally affected by the child's relation to the breast. It is the frustration at the

breast, and crucially the weaning, that makes the infant turn to the phantasy father's penis and become aware of the triangular situation. The father appears in Klein's theory explicitly as the infant reaches the depressive position and has a relationship with the mother as a whole person who is separate from it and not under the infant's control. The infant perceives the mother as having a life of her own. This perception includes principally a relationship of the mother with the father, and this leads to feelings of exclusion, envy and jealousy on the part of the infant. The infant's awareness in the depressive position of his/her ambivalence in relation to both parents and their relationship fosters reparative impulses aimed not only at the restoration of the breast and mother, but also at restoring a good parental couple and a good family as a whole.

Still, one does not hear very much about the father in his own right in the earlier life of the infant. Though the 'father' is mentioned, an explicit assignment of his role in Klein's more theoretical discussions does not occur. (See for example, Klein 1945). Overall, one has the impression that the father is conceived of by the infant, in her theory, in the first instance as a part object, that is, the penis is regarded as a derivative from the breast or as part of the combined parent-figure, rather than conceived of as an independent object. Klein does not overtly say so but this is the impression conveyed.

Thus, just as Freud's overall theory was a patriarchal one, in which the dominant struggle is carried on between father and son over the mother's body from the age of five onwards, Klein's theory is essentially a matriarchal one, in which the basic conflicts are conducted in relation to the mother with the father as at most some sort of displacement object.

In sum, then, Klein has little to say directly about the role of the father in the infant's life, although, as we shall see later, some of her other concepts do help in understanding observations of children of single parents.

Other psychoanalysts extended and developed the work of Klein:

Bion (1962) thought that a bad relationship between container and contained (in its prototype - the nipple in the mouth), affects crucially the beginning of the Oedipus complex. The original relation between container and contained is the basis of a later concept of the relationship between the penis and the vagina. Following Bion, Segal (1989) suggested that, in order to preserve a tolerable relation to the breast, the infant splits off the bad aspects from both him/herself and the breast and creates a bad third figure. She suggests that the father's penis is the ideal container for such projections.

R. Britton (1989) extends Bion's description of the original relation between container and contained and formulates the Oedipal triangle in the depressive position as defining a particular mental space within the boundary of this triangle. In this mental space the child can maintain differentiated relations with each parent, contrasting with the primitive relation to a combined parental figure, whilst recognising at the same time the existence of the parents as a couple, with him/herself as an outsider. Whereas in the original situation the child perceives of him/herself as a participant and a beneficiary of the parental relationship, a recognition of a parental couple confronts him/her with a good contained-container relationship from which s/he is excluded. It confronts the child with separateness and separation as part of the working through of the depressive position. It also confronts him/her with the recognition that the nature of the link between the parents is different in kind from the relation of the child to the parents, and at the moment unavailable to him/her. The child's rivalry with one parent for the other is resolved by the child relinquishing his/her sexual claim on parents by accepting the reality of their sexual relationship.

Britton stresses that mental processes are fundamentally affected by the existence of such a mental space. The acknowledgement by the child of the parents' relationship with each other unites his/her psychic world, limiting it to one world shared with two parents in which different object relationships can exist. The closure of the Oedipal triangle by the recognition of the link joining the parents provides a limiting boundary for the internal

world. It creates a 'triangular space', bounded by the three persons of the Oedipal situation and all their potential relationships. It includes the possibility of the child being a participant in a relationship and observed by a third person as well as being an observer of a relationship between two people. This provides the child with a capacity for seeing him/herself in an interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining his/her own, for reflecting on him/herself whilst being him/herself.

While Klein's followers extended her theory in useful ways, the same criticism of Klein's theory applies to them. They do not include overtly a theory about the role of the father, and certainly during the first six months of the infant's life the father is a constructed object in the infant's and the mother's minds rather than a person in reality who has a role in his own right.

#### 2.43 Winnicott

Though Winnicott does not have an elaborated theory about the role of the father during early childhood, he always talks about the role of the father with the implication that the father is necessary in his own right and not as a reduplication of the mother. (Winnicott 1944, 1964, 1966). Winnicott (1966) talks about a maternal element in males but stresses his view that when fathers become mothers this interferes with their function as fathers.

Winnicott (1950, 1960) assigned the father the role of a 'protecting agent' who frees the mother to devote herself to the baby at a period of her life when she is vulnerable to impingement and interference from the external environment. Nevertheless, to Winnicott, like Klein, the father becomes important as a person only when the infant emerges from the stage of absolute dependence and begins to relate to separate whole people. The importance of the father's role at this stage is to continue the 'disillusionment' begun by the mother's adaptive 'failure'. Such disillusionment is best carried on within a rich context of relationships. The father represents the external environment: he goes out to work and comes back home.

In his only paper devoted solely to the father, (Winnicott 1944) he mentions briefly the father as representing the indestructible environment. As Winnicott sees it, this comes about because certain qualities of the mother, such as her punctuality and her strictness and sternness with her infant, gradually group together in the infant's mind, and then adhere to the feelings which the infant later on develops towards the father. The father's role in this aspect of the child's development is to permit destructiveness in the child, as it is a safe experience for the child to be destructive when there is something indestructible against which to kick.

We can say then that Winnicott assigned a role to the father as:-

- a) Protector of the mother, and
- b) Embodiment of the external indestructible environment.

By implication, in this second aspect he contributes considerably to the child's growing separateness and individuation.

#### 2.44 Recent Work

The role of the father in early childhood has come into focus in recent years. Greenacre (1966), Burlingham (1973), Mahler et al (1975), Abelin (1975) and Ross (1979) all consider what they term "the role of the pre-Oedipal father". They all see the father as having a role, but only in the separation-individuation process.

Loewald (1951) and Greenson (1968) draw attention to the importance of early identification with the father in the process of separation-individuation as a protection against the dread of sinking back into the original unstructured state of identity with mother.

In a variation of this theme, Arvanitakis (1985) points out that from the beginning of the infant's life, as a means of dealing with overwhelming anxieties inherent in the mother-

infant dual unity, a triangle is formed through the introduction of the 'father'. The 'father' is a joint creation of mother and her infant. The triangulation protects both mother and baby against fears of annihilation and is the prototype of future symbolisation. Failure of this process leads to disturbances of symbolisation and a pre-disposition to psychotic states.

Lacan (1966) has formulated the notion of the 'symbolic father' as the foundation of the 'symbolic order' which extricates the infant from the 'imaginary order' representing the narcissistic fusion with the mother. Although differently expressed, this formulation is ultimately similar to that of Arvanitakis.

These writers do give the father a role, either as representing the indestructible environment, or as the raw material out of which mother and child create a symbolic object, but none gives him a positive shaping role, as a person in his own right.

#### 2.45 Wisdom

Wisdom (1976) is the only psychoanalyst who tries to construct a theory about the role of the father in early childhood which is both large and also quite different from that of the mother. He assumes that an object relationship with both mother and father is established soon after birth. He also assumes that if the father has anything to do with the baby, it will know the difference between him and its mother at a few weeks old, this knowledge of the difference consisting of a loosely integrated sets of experiences.

The baby recognises a difference between mother and father in smell, firmness of holding (involving sinewiness, hardness and softness), voice, capacity to allay anxiety and something that Wisdom calls detachment. Most of these can have a characteristic male or female tone. He hypothesises that the constellation of these qualities constituting maleness associates with penile eroticism and forcefulness, and of those constituting femaleness associates with vaginal eroticism and breast propensities.

If Wisdom's claims are valid, then the child must obtain from his/her father something distinct from what s/he obtains from the mother and this must be from early childhood, though gradually developing as the child matures.

Reverting from the latency period back to babyhood, Wisdom considers the factor of detachment as distinguishing the experience of the child with father from the one with mother. Both parents teach the child things which involve some degree or other of frustration. But father and mother teach the child how to accept frustrations of different kinds. The father's teaching is about frustration to do with the realities of doing things. When the father is encouraging the child to accept this kind of frustration, he conveys that, although this may be a bit irksome, nevertheless one can endure it. In other words, the father would not be comforting but would show some sort of detachment in the sense of not being overwhelmed by the events or by the distress in the child. This feature, according to Wisdom, is much more markedly conveyed by men than by women.

In a similar way in the period of early babyhood, he claims that the mother will comfort and soothe with love and understanding. The father may make a play noise and give comfort also, but the form of comfort a father gives has this element of detachment in it more than that of the mother. Thus, when the baby is hungry or distressed, in pain or wet or whatever, the father gives sympathy but also gives the impression that things are bearable.

In Wisdom's model of infant development there are two fundamental concepts: nuclear introjection and orbital introjection. Nuclear introjection describes a situation where the gender of the introject is the same as that of the receiver. Orbital introjection describes a situation where introject and receiver are of opposite gender.

The dynamics are as follows:-

**The infant introjects the (combined) breast and penis.**

**In the case of the infant boy the breast is projected to become an orbital introject, whereas the penis is retained as a nuclear introject.**

**In the case of the infant girl the opposite obtains, i.e. the penis becomes an orbital introject while the breast remains as a nuclear introject.**

**How does all of this affect the relationship of the infant with the father? Because of the element, the penis - nuclear introject and reality - common to both boy and father, the boy, in time of trouble, will feel able to go to the father to be made stronger in order to ingest some of his father's strength.**

**The girl too has an element, the penis, in common with her father, which will enable her to relate to him. However in this case the relation pivots about an element which is an orbital (not nuclear) introject and reality, and this makes for a difference in tone. Characteristically she will go to him to feel valued, as containing an "other", i.e. the breast, her nuclear introject, rather than to feel strengthened in her similarity.**

**On this theory of structure what would be the likely, or at least possible, effects of the father's absence? Using Wisdom's model we are considering the outcomes of a situation where there is a breast to be introjected, and there-after retained as nuclear or transformed into an orbital introject, but where there is no penis to be similarly treated.**

**Assuming that the infant boy has to effect a nuclear introjection of the father's penis and thereby reach a position where he can repair damage to his mother image (Klein 1940) and that the infant girl's capacity to repair is attributed mainly to the nuclear introject of the breast, then one would expect one of the following consequences if the penis introjection were inadequate.**

**In the case of a boy:**



- 1) The little boy might be richly endowed with breast introjection, in short an overstressed feminine identification.
- 2) As we assumed that for the boy the penile introjection is needed for reparation in the depressive position (Klein 1935), therefore a failure here could lead to the development of depression.
- 3) To compensate for the absence of penis introject, an attempt could be made to hallucinate one, and this could result in manic attitudes (Klein 1940).
- 4) In the absence of a normal penis introjection, a search could be made for one but without a clear apprehension of its properties, and it could well be confused with, say, vagina or mouth.

In the case of a boy he will have to admit a nuclear rather than an orbital defect. This must prevent him from parting with his nuclear breast introject (otherwise he would feel completely empty). Thus he will have a sense of not being fully male.

In the case of a girl the lack of an adequate penis introject (orbital) would mean that she lacks something to have and with which to act.

Assuming that the integration of an orbital introject enables the child to form a two-dimensional gender identity with one identification being dominant, then in the case of both a boy and a girl one would expect that failure in integration would be an immediate salient consequence.

#### 2.46 Ogden

In combining a few (so called opposing) psychoanalytic models of child personality development, Ogden outlines a very useful theory regarding early development and the Oedipus complex.

In attempting to conceptualise the distinction between pre-Oedipal and Oedipal object relations, Ogden introduces the concept of 'transitional Oedipal relationship' (Ogden,

1992) as a way of understanding the psychological interpersonal process mediating the entry into the Oedipus complex. He describes a different development in the transition into the Oedipal complex in the case of the boy and the girl. Ogden defines this process as 'transitional' because this process of relationship serves the function of allowing the infant to discover the 'otherness' in a form that is experienced as both 'me' and 'not-me' at the same time.

### The Girl

Ogden describes the psychological reorganisation required at the threshold of the female Oedipus complex as extensive. Both mother and father are discovered to a much fuller degree than before as external objects. The child becomes aware of her parents as people who have an intimate relationship with one another that does not include her. At the same time, an intense, triangulated set of whole-object relationships is established in which the father is taken as love object, while the mother is established as an ambivalently loved rival. According to Ogden, this reorganisation takes place non-traumatically because it is mediated by a relationship with the mother that embodies the following paradox: *the little girl falls in love with the mother-as-father and with the father-as mother*. From Ogden's perspective, what occurs in this transitional relationship is that the little girl falls in love with the (not yet fully external) mother who is engaged in an unconscious identification with her own father in her internal set of Oedipal object relations. The question of whether the little girl is in love with her mother or her father (in love with an internal object or an external object) never arises. It is both. She is in love with her mother-as-father and her father-as-mother. This paradox is the core of what allows the entry into the Oedipus complex to be achieved without overwhelming disillusionment that would require growth-limiting defensive manoeuvres. The little girl does not have to reject the mother in order to love the father; she does not have to renounce an internal object for an external object.

The role of the mother as Oedipal transitional object is to allow herself to be loved as a man (her own unconscious identification with her own father). In so doing, she unconsciously says to her daughter, "If I were a man, I would be in love with you, find you beautiful, and would very much want to marry you". Since the unconscious mind knows nothing of "If I were ...", the mother's unconscious communication is more accurately stated as "I am a man, your father, and am in love with you, find you beautiful, and want to marry you".

The mother in this relationship allows herself to be used as a conduit to a relationship with 'the other', who paradoxically is already a part of herself in her own identification with the other (her own father).

Ogden claims that there is no such thing as a mother and infant, since the father is always represented in the unconscious mind of the mother. He emphasised that mother's capacity to serve in the transitional role under discussion is compromised to the degree to which her unconscious relationship with her own Oedipal father is conflicted.

For Ogden, the Oedipal transitional relationship to the mother is a form of relatedness through which the mother unconsciously gives her blessing to the little girl's Oedipal love of her father, and, from there, her love of other men. He stresses that inadequacy of this transitional relationship stifles the development of the little girl's interest in the father. It becomes necessary for the little girl to deny wishes and strivings in relation to the father, and to deny the thought that the father has anything to offer her. If the father does not attempt to over-ride the mother's unconscious prohibition of the Oedipal romance, the little girl feels confirmed in her belief that she should not have romantic and sexual feelings for her father (and rivalrous feelings for her mother) and that the feelings she does have are bad - too disloyal, too dirty, too intense, too greedy, or directed at the wrong person, and so. Whether or not the father is emotionally available to the little girl in this stage of development, the mother's inability or unwillingness to serve as an Oedipal

transitional object is interpreted as an unwillingness on the part of the mother to condone the little girl's entry into Oedipal object relations. Such a mother is unable to identify with her own father in a way that serves a transitional function. He points out that to enter into an Oedipal relationship with the father under these circumstances involves a dangerous attempt to by-pass the mother. This is an extremely difficult task in the absence of the father's active assistance. Even the wish to be like the father is experienced as a forbidden act and as a betrayal of the mother. This identification with the father is unconsciously experienced by the little girl as an attempt to be what she cannot, and should not, have. It is felt to be an act of stealing what she senses should not be hers.

Ogden elaborates the implication for the girl's development of gender identity where there are difficulties in the transitional Oedipal relationship. He says that the dilemma of having to choose between the mother and father (maleness and femaleness) that is generated by a mother's fear of engaging in an identification with her own father is at the core of many disorders of gender identity as a healthy gender identity is a reflection of the creation of a dialectical interplay between masculine and feminine identities. This occurs when one does not have to choose between loving (and identifying with) one's mother and loving (and identifying with) one's father. Among the pivotal interpersonal experiences serving as a framework for this development is the Oedipal transitional relationship to the mother, in which the mother is male and female (mother-in-father and father-in-mother). In order for this experience to be generated, mother and daughter must be able to create and make use of a 'play space' (Winnicott, 1971) that both connects and separates them. The Oedipus complex is a drama to be played with in this space that is first created by the mother and daughter and later entered into by the father. If in the very beginning of the Oedipal phase, the question of who it is that the child is in love with (mother or father) must be answered, the play space 'collapses' (Ogden, 1985, 1986) and the Oedipal drama becomes all too real, too concrete, and the child cannot use these life events as

experiences that would facilitate growth. When this kind of choice has to be made, Ogden predicts the following difficulties:

(1) The child will become neither masculine nor feminine since in healthy masculinity or femininity each depends upon, and is created by, the other.

(2) A construction of pseudo-identity which would lack the subtle resonance of the masculinity and femininity that characterises mature gender identity.

Ogden sees the triangulation which is the outcome of satisfactory Oedipal transitional relationship as a restructuring of the fundamental bisexuality of the child in such a way that femininity need not be a flight from, or denial of, masculinity and vice versa.

### The Boy

Ogden describes the difficulties in the boy's entrance into the Oedipal complex as stemming from two sources:

(1) The Oedipal mother and father are perceived by the child as dangerously external and therefore unknown, unpredictable and uncontrollable.

(2) The boy must struggle to create a distance between himself and the powerful pre-Oedipal mother while he falls in love with the Oedipal mother. The pre-Oedipal mother with whom the boy was very close is perceived by the boy both as blissful and terrifying at the same time, as a regression to an undifferentiated state between the two is perceived by the boy as terrifying.

Ogden claims that the journey between the external Oedipal object mother and the omnipotent pre-Oedipal mother is in part mediated by the power of the primal scene phantasies to organise sexual meaning and identity. He describes a constellation where the image of the observed parental intercourse serves as a mould, a way of thinking about the unthinkable. The objects constituting the phantasy are in the beginning predominantly part-objects engaged in frightening battle that involves mysterious sexuality intermingled with violence. There is initially very little of an interpreting subject in the experiencing of these phantasies; rather, there is predominantly a self-as-object

who is *part of the scene* with almost no sense of being removed from it, much less a sense of being an observing subject capable of thinking about and understanding (interpreting) one's response to it. Nonetheless, there is always a rudimentary sense of thirdness inherent in the structure of the primal scene phantasy. This thirdness holds the potential to become in the course of development the fully triangulated object relations that characterise more mature versions of the primal scene phantasy and of the Oedipus complex itself.

According to Ogden, the little boy encounters phallic thirdness within the transitional Oedipal relationship to the mother. In this relationship the mother is simultaneously experienced as father-in-mother and mother-in-father. The question of which is the case is never asked. It is the mother's set of unconscious internal Oedipal object relations that is the framework within which the Oedipal transitional relationship with the little boy develops. The mother brings the phallic father to the emerging Oedipal relationship with her son through her own internal Oedipal father, with whom she is identified. The mother's unconscious Oedipus complex involves a reverberating, mutually enriching set of object relations in which the mother is simultaneously a little girl in love with her father, her father in love with his daughter, a mother in love with her husband, a mother and father protectively guarding generational boundaries. (These object relations are only a small sample of the multitude of internal object relations constituting the unconscious Oedipus complex). The mother who is identified with each of these internal objects is psychologically drawn upon in different ways by her son in the course of their evolving relationship. At the threshold of the Oedipus complex, the mother is both the internal object father who sexually empowers the boy, as well as the external object mother who is the object of the boy's sexual desire.

The paradox of masculinity-in-femininity, of thirdness-in-twoness, described by Ogden as being at the heart of the transitional Oedipal relationship comes to constitute a new version of the primal scene phantasy as the little boy begins to enter into more mature

Oedipal object relations. At this juncture, the primal scene phantasy is developed into a narrative of the observation of the father and the mother in the act of sexual intercourse. The transitional Oedipal mother, who had in a paradoxical manner embodied the father-in-the-mother and the mother-in-the-father, now becomes elaborated as a figure in a narrative in which father and mother are more distinctly differentiated and then joined together in the act of sexual intercourse. In other words, sexual difference is for the first time clearly acknowledged and at the same time a new unity is created: the unity of the child's knowledge of sexual intercourse involving two parents, each different from the other, and each distinct from himself. In this more differentiated version of the primal scene phantasy, the little boy no longer experiences himself as the embodiment of sexual excitement in a world of part objects; rather, he is now a subject in a world of whole objects who experiences the sexual excitement of having a phallus, and who - through a more mature identification with his father - takes his mother as the object of his love and sexual desire.

According to Ogden, this new version of the primal scene phantasy is an important reminder to the little boy that after all, he is his mother's son, not his mother's husband; that he is, in reality, emotionally and sexually immature while his mother and father are emotionally and sexually mature; that he is his father's son and is not the father himself. These ambivalently experienced reminders of external reality help the little boy maintain the primal scene phantasy in a potential space in which unconscious thinking can occur as opposed to hallucination and delusion. Excessively eroticised object relations with the mother render these phantasies indistinguishable from reality. Under such circumstances psychotic identification 'I am my father' replaces mature identification 'I am like my father'.

In the case where there is an impoverished identification of the mother with her internal father the boy would have a sense of a missing 'other', i.e. a missing father in mother. The boy then finds himself psychologically alone with his Oedipal mother, and this fact profoundly influences several aspects of his development. First, there is very little sense

of a phallic presence with which to identify, and therefore a scarcity of opportunity to become phallically empowered. Secondly, the little boy is not insulated by the protective prohibition of the phallic third (the father-in-mother) who claims his wife as his own object of love and sexual desire and thus helps to delineate a generational boundary. The act of protective prohibition ordinarily provided by the father (initially the father-in-mother) is of critical value to the little boy. Without the protectively prohibiting father-in-mother with whom to identify, the primal scene phantasy becomes terrifying and must be defended against by means of perverse sexual solutions. That is, forms of sexuality that are used in the service of denying the separateness of external objects and sexual differences. The primal scene phantasy, in the absence of a father-in-mother, is a phantasy of intercourse with the omnipotent mother of unmediated two-ness. However, in addition, this mother has begun to take on the terrifying strangeness of genital female sexuality. This female sexuality is not made safe by a father-in-mother, a phallus within the vagina (the mother's identification with her own father). Unopposed female sexuality becomes a frightening caricature of sexuality for the boy in that it is marked by the absence of the father who in phantasy has been destroyed by the mother. It is sexuality inseparable from the catastrophe of the destruction of the phallic father, and therefore a sexuality that blocks the little boy's entrance into sexual and emotional maturity and the achievement of mature masculine gender identity.

#### 2.47 Gaddini

Gaddini (1976, 1979) has described the formation of the father-in-the-child mind at an early stage of development. Before we turn to his description it is necessary to refer to Gaddini's concepts relating to the beginning of the infant's life. Gaddini distinguishes between two areas of mental experience, corresponding to a two-fold primitive attitude towards the object. He defined them as the psychosensory area and the psycho-oral area (Gaddini, 1969). The psychosensory area is the more ancient one and it has its source in primitive perception through the soma. The psycho-oral area is connected with the



gradual recognition of stimuli external to the self, its main source being the oral activity in the feeding situation. The psychosensory experiences tend to avoid recognition of the object as not being part of the self and expressing a disposition to 'be' the object. The psycho-oral experiences confront the child with the object in a more real manner, giving rise to wishes, conflicts, frustrations, and anxiety, and basically expressing a tendency to 'have' or possess the object. The activity of the psychosensory area develops, according to Gaddini, in accordance with a functional model - 'imitation in order to be', and leads to phantasies of fusion by way of magical identity with the object and to imitations in the direction of being the object. Hence, there is no acknowledgement of the object being external and separate. The activity of the psycho-oral area develops on the basis of the functional model of introjection and incorporation, and leads to phantasies of fusion with the object through taking it into one's own self. This way of possessing the object involves the gradual recognition of the object as external to the self and the need to confront real dependence on the object. These two areas are in constant interaction and they produce a primitive structure of the infant personality in which the psychosensory area is in a central position and the psycho-oral area is on the periphery.

There is a similarity between Gaddini's psychosensory area and Bick's description of the functions of the skin in early development (Bick, 1968) . It is important to note the similarity between Gaddini's notion of this primitive primary structure and Wisdom's model (Wisdom 1976) whereby the infant introjects a combined breast and penis interacting as nuclear and orbital introjects . The mental organisation described above allows the child to move on from complete identification with the mother's breast (purely psychosensory) towards a capacity to distinguish the object from the self.

The presence of the father and a process which Gaddini calls 'the primal scene process' (see below) are in part the means by which the infant moves out of his/her illusory world of imitative identity into object recognition and an awareness of the parents' relationship. Gaddini thinks that the child has a series of experiences of the parents' relationship and

that they are elaborated in phantasy and then condensed into a mental defensive construction which may make it appear as if the child had witnessed the intercourse of the parents only once. The mother in the primal scene is experienced by the child as utterly different from the familiar mother of the imitative identity. She is experienced as 'extraneous', a monster, and she is perceived as such because these are the aspects of the 'non-self'. Gradually, the mother comes to be conceived as 'external' rather than 'extraneous'. It is only when the mother is conceived as external that the father is perceived and he is then conceived as if he were the 'extraneous mother'. The father gradually comes to be distinguished perceptually and accepted as a dichotomous aspect of the 'external mother'. It is at this point, according to Gaddini, that a process of differentiation of the father from the mother can begin. From the child's point of view, the mother as an object comes from within the child, and the moment she begins to appear as different from the child's self a long process starts, at the end of which mother becomes 'external', but split into two figures. The father comes then from mother, as a split part of her. For Gaddini, the father comes to exist only as an external figure, and only at the point when the mother also has become external. In this sense one can say that the father is the first object external to the child.

## 2.5 Role of the Father: Other Perspectives

In considering other viewpoints we shall look at some of the recent research regarding fatherhood (including its absence), grouping it roughly under three heads: Developmental Psychology, Psychology *tout court*, and Sociology.

### 2.51 Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychology addresses the significance and consequences for the infant of the early interaction between father and infant. Two aspects of the interaction are examined: behavioural differences between mothers and fathers, with the implied

differences in the quality of these interactions, and paternal differentiations based on the child's gender.

In contrasting behaviours of mothers and fathers the psychological research suggests that interaction behaviours of fathers are characteristically different from those of mothers. Thus fathers, when compared with mothers, are said to: engage in less talking (Rebelsky S Hanks, 1971); be more playful than containing (Yogman, Dixon, Tronick, Adamson, Als, and Brazelton, 1976); engage more in mimicry of pre-speech grimaces than mothers (Trevarthen, 1974); engage more in games playing and hold their infants less (Field, 1978); be more playful and companionable (Bronstein, 1984). The most persistent findings are:

That fathers are engaged in more active and stimulating interaction than mothers (Clarke and Stewart, 1978, 1980; Lamb, 1977a, 1977b, Power and Parke, 1981).

Research from a perspective of attachment theory suggests that infants attach to both parents early and that the father-infant and mother-infant relationships may involve different kinds of experiences for infants, such that the two parents have differential influences on personality development from infancy onward (Lamb 1977a). Yogman (1982) suggests that the father's more stimulating and arousing pattern of interaction with his infant is related to the acquisition and differentiation of new skills by the infant or to the development of independence, exploration, and autonomy. This implies that the child internalises two working models, one in relation to the mother and one in relation to the father. Both models serve as prototypes from birth for same sex and opposite sex relationships. This hypothesis is in contradiction to the classic psychoanalytic notion of the father's role around the oedipal phase; but it is clearly in accordance with Klein's concepts of the early oedipal phase and with Wisdom's, Ogden's and Gaddini's models. The developmental psychology models, as well as the above psychoanalytic models, are supported by the evidence that, by eight to nine months of age, infants are attached to both parents (Belsky 1978; Lamb 1979). However if the infant is distressed s/he will go to the mother for comfort (Lamb 1976), suggesting that it is the mother who provides a particular type of security.

From the perspective of gender differentiation there is a persistent finding throughout the research that fathers make cruder, grosser and more apparent distinctions between the sexes of children than do mothers (Bronstein 1984, White, 1980). When compared with fathers of daughters, fathers of sons spend more time looking at, touching, vocalising, responding and playing with them. (Easterbrook and Goldberg 1984) In a teaching situation fathers of boys set high standards for them, emphasise achievement and pay closer attention to the cognitive elements of the task. Fathers of girls tend to joke and play with them and protect them (Block, 198). Mackey (1992) has interesting comments regarding fathering behaviours. However, they are not particularly useful in furthering one's detailed insight in the micro situation.

All the above researchers describe aspects of behaviour rather than meaning. It is only Sheila Rossan (1989), who has given depth and coherence to the specialised investigations of psychological research on fathering. She suggests that the mother provides the infant with the sense of constancy, of continuity and of predictability, whereas the father provides a sense of controlled unpredictability. Following the literature on attachment, Rossan hypothesises that the child internalises two working models of relationships: one in relation to the mother and the other in relation to the father. Both models serve from birth on as prototypes for same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. The working model of the mother-child relationship includes elements of safety and security; that of the father-child relationship, heightened arousal, excitement and fun. In accord with the different quality in the interaction of father-boy versus father-girl, she suggests that the self image of the son is one of losing control unless handled firmly - "I am dangerous". The self image of the girl is one of gratification through verbal, warm, interpersonal relationships - "I am friendly". The girl then sees her mastery of the environment as occurring through the use of her interpersonal skills, typically in a co-operative atmosphere, and sees herself as vulnerable, in need of care and protection by the stronger male. The boy's working model of male-male relationships

includes components of the mastery of things and of tasks, typically in a competitive atmosphere.

From interactions with the two parents the infant generates meaning in relation to:

- (a) his/her own identity;
- (b) appropriate behaviour with each parent;
- (c) expectations from each parent.

### 2.52 Psychology: Single Mother Families

Within psychology there is a vast amount of research regarding the consequences for the child of the father's absence. Some typical findings:–

Father-absent children showed less motivation to achieve and compete, less desire for mastery and less willingness to endure negative consequences. The father's absence has a more adverse effect on boys than on girls. (Scher 1984, Stanrock 1972).

Father-absent children are more reserved, less intelligent, emotionally unstable, excitable, and careless of social rules.(Nachmann 1986, Zold 1975).

However there is a growing concern in recent years with the way researchers like those quoted above have viewed single mother families. According to Gongla it seems that the researchers reflect the public interest in single families, which has manifested itself as an anxiety about an increasing 'social problem'. Such families are seen as deviant. There is the social stigma of 'illegitimate birth' hanging over many of these families. Researchers adopted the stigmatizing view and expected to find problems and psychopathology developing within these families.(Gongla 1982)

Characteristically researchers did not study the family as a whole but individuals ( children) within the family. Typical studies of 'father absence' divided the children into two groups: dual parent families and single mother families. Differences in the individual characteristics of children were sought between the two groups, with such differences being attributed to the presence or absence of the father. Common dependent variables included : cognitive development (Lessing, Zagorin and Nelson 1976; Briller and Bahm

1971); sexual development (Badaires 1976, Briller and Bahm 1971), and a variety of others such as delinquency and emotional disturbance (Kalter 1977).

### 2.53 Sociology :Single Mother Families

According to Schorr and Moen the position of single mother families within the larger society seems to be governed by two factors:—

(1) *One parent* families are presumed deviant, even pathological.

(2) The heading of a family by a *woman* is also presumed deviant, since women are not supposed to head families. (Schorr and Moen 1979)

The economic status of single mother families is relatively low (Ross and Sawhill 1975). The low economic status has major consequences. These families are often forced to reduce consumption and to live in poor neighbourhoods. This leads to confrontation with problems of reduced personal safety, higher delinquency rates, and poorer schools (Brandwein , Brown and Fox 1974).

Within the micro environment relatives may not understand or approve of the single mother's situation.; they will offer criticism and unwanted advice (Weiss 1979).

Friendships with other single persons (without children) will be likely to fade. A degree of social isolation will ensue (Hetherington, Cox and Cox 1979).

Married parents are healthier than single parents.(Berkman 1969).

Single mothers work longer hours and tend to face more stressful life changes. They use more alternative child-care arrangements. Their lives are therefore more segmented, with greater separation of their roles as mother, worker, and woman than the lives of married mothers (Weinraub and Wolf 1983).

Considering the above it is not surprising that single mothers use more instrumental behaviours with their children as compared with their married counterparts (Rasmussen 1975).

With no support from another parent the single mother (when faced with a child's opposition) may react with over-strict punishment or rejection . Also she may pass over many transgressions , lacking the energy to discipline appropriately, and not wanting to

jeopardise the emotional partnership with the child, upon which she relies.(Weiss 1975,1979).

### 2.54 Comment

The items of research discussed above (in 2.51, 2.52, 2.53) are of uneven quality. Some are excellent, others of uncertain value. Several comments suggest themselves.

(1) We are dealing with complex many-faceted human variables (delinquency, for example). In many cases, for the findings to be cogent, the numbers (sample sizes) would have had to have been quite large and the studies carefully replicated in a variety of situations. As far as one can ascertain these preconditions for cogency have generally not been met. [There is a deservedly well-known study by Brown and Harris (1978) of 'Social Origins of Depression '. None of the caveats discussed here are applicable to this study. Especially illuminating is the cross-fertilisation achieved by combining the depth of meaning of a case-study with the objectivity of a survey. Unfortunately there is no comparable study of aspects of single mother families.]

(2) Causal effect and statistical correlation are not the same. There was sometimes an (implicit) tendency to treat them as if they were.

(3) The variable.....father-being-there..... has been regarded as patently dichotomous: Yes/No (Present/Absent). This seems simplistic: in human terms there are degrees and modes of presence and absence.

(4) The above researchers have mostly been concerned with articulating measurable variables and investigating connections between them in more or less rigorously designed and statistically analysed studies. These are laudable essays in precision and objectivity. However, a human being is a person, i.e. a creature of meaning, motive and history, and these are dimensions which, with few exceptions, are only tangentially addressed.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**METHODS AND DESIGN**



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND DESIGN**

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### 3.1. The Advantages of a Human Observer within a Relatively Natural Setting

In this kind of research we can use either a video camera or dispense with it, relying only upon the human observer. Also there is the question of the degree of 'naturalness': is the observer always located within a relatively natural setting, or, on the other hand, does the observer control the setting by using devices such as the interview schedule or questionnaire. Although it would be possible to interview the mothers, this was not done for two reasons. First, the focus of the research is on unverballed meaning. Second, interviews and questionnaires do not uncover the internal world of the child.

The advantages of using a video camera are that it allows the observer to view the film again and again, stopping at points where one desires a closer look. Video is an easy and reliable way for public communication of the facts observed (Spradley, 1980). Using a video camera, the researcher can maintain distance and s/he is not too involved in the family and so can be more 'objective' (Sechrest, 1979; Jacobs, 1977; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest and Grove, 1981).

However, a video camera is highly obtrusive and does, therefore, to some extent, create a different setting. This is a grave disadvantage as: 'phenomena of study, whatever they may be, take their meaning as much from their context as they do from themselves, ... reality construction cannot be separated from the world in which it is experienced' (Lincoln and Guba, 1981, p. 189). The common argument (Roberts and Rezaglia, 1965; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest, 1966) supporting the use of video is that, although obtrusive, the people observed become used to the camera after a while.

Even if this is true, there are still other disadvantages, notably the restriction of viewpoint. The camera covers only a specific field of view, whereas an observer can move about to obtain the best view. The human, imperfect as humans are, is virtually infinitely adaptable. The multi-purpose human can collect information about multiple factors, and at multiple levels, simultaneously (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). The human instrument can

duplicate virtually any other instrument people have devised, perhaps with a little less reliability, but probably well enough for most purposes. It can also perform several tasks simultaneously.

Moreover, the human instrument can bring to bear all of the power of its tacit knowledge. The capacity to begin with a fund not only of propositional knowledge but also of tacit knowledge and the ability to be infinitely adaptable make the human investigator ideal in situations which pivot upon meaning and its protean variability. The human observer can sense salient factors, think of ways to follow up on them, and make continuous changes, all while actively engaged in the inquiry itself. Thus the loss in objectivity is counterbalanced by a gain in adaptability, insight, and a large base of knowledge (Heron, 1981).

The human observer can sense and respond to all personal and environmental cues that exist (Gorden, 1980; Longstreet, 1978; Hall, 1966), interacting with the situation to sense its dimensions and make them explicit. The human observer has the ability to process data as soon as it becomes available, to generate an hypothesis on the spot and to test it with respondents in the very situation in which it was created. The human observer has the capability of summarising data and feeding them back to the respondents for clarification, correction and amplification (Douglas, 1976).

These are some of the justifications for using a comparatively unconstrained human observer as the chosen method (instrument) for this research. Are there any drawbacks? Certainly, and they are substantial. Both reliability and validity are very much harder to achieve than, say, in the situation where a tightly structured interview schedule is used. There are many reasons for this. Two obvious ones are:—

(a) A human being can receive a huge amount of data but it is certainly possible (as we know to our cost in daily life) for one person to observe one set of facts which have almost no overlap with the set observed by another.

(b) Even when two observers agree on the data of observation they can still disagree profoundly on the interpretation.

The Tavistock method has the following characteristics:—

- A very long period of training (two years).
- Constant attention to supervision.
- A definite theoretical stance in relation to interpretation.

One can see how all of this would go a long way to meeting the criticisms we have just considered.

This study concentrates on the inner world of a person. It is necessary therefore to discover and explicate the inner reality which each person experiences. Therefore the focus is on the whole individual rather than on specific attitudes or attributes of the subjects treated as isolated variables. Moreover, the chosen method must be capable of producing data which illuminate conscious and unconscious processes both in the individual and within the family. By focussing on the individual as a whole and on unconscious processes, the relationships between different parts of the whole personality can be investigated, notably the processes of introjection, projection, identification, identity conflicts and unconscious fantasies. The very medium through which the study proceeds and the research data are gathered is the relationship between the observer and subjects, notably the transference and countertransference effects. (The subjects of transference, counter-transference and the uncovering of non-verbalised meaning are further discussed later in this chapter and are summarised in the Glossary )

The objectivity of video is gained at too high a price. Only the visual is recorded, and not the accompanying elements of feeling; these have to be added later by the viewer, who is then operating in a relatively impoverished setting. The gain in objectivity is therefore more apparent than real. Moreover, a video camera, like other material research

instruments, modifies that human behaviour which is under study (Sherwood, 1980). Psychological research with human subjects always involves a social interaction between researchers and their respondents, whether the research setting is a laboratory or the field. Even under rigorously controlled conditions there are unintended experimenter effects which frequently remain unrecognised and yet potently affect the research data (Rosenthal, 1966; Friedman, 1967).

In the methodology there seem to be two dichotomies: (a) participant versus non-participant observer; (b) concealed observation versus non-concealed observation. In the case of a non-participant observer, the observer has only one role to play. In the case of a participant observer the observer plays two roles simultaneously: that of an observer and that of a legitimate and committed member of the group. The main advantage of using, then, a participant observer is the chance to maximise the benefits discussed formerly of the human instrument versus video. The disadvantage is the greater difficulty for the observer of maintaining his stance as a neutral observer, as well as increasing the difficulty in monitoring and assessing the effects and modifications of the observer on the respondents. Between these two opposites there is a continuum depending upon the degree of the observer's participation and the information concealed from the family.

In the case of this research, initially the observer was perceived to be located on the spectrum quite close to a non-participant observer. That is, to be as passive as possible in the interactions with the subjects, and to avoid sharing his thoughts and insights with them. However, retroactively, it seems that in all the families observed the development in the observations was to a great extent in relation to the observer. The response of the different members of the families to the presence of a male observer became one of the focal points of the research and enabled us to understand the meaning of the father's absence. It appears that, to some extent, the observer represented the absent father as well as the qualities of a present one. Thus, the presence of a male observer in a single-mother family may have caused an impact on the dynamics of the family as well as on the

dynamics of the personal intrapsychic development of the children. The ability to observe the family response to a male observer may demonstrate once again the advantage of using a live observer versus a video camera.

### 3.2: The Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts

This is an appropriate place to discuss an important methodological point, namely the application, to *observational* material generated within a comparatively *natural* setting, of psychoanalytical theory which has arisen out of clinical psychoanalytic practice. The differences of setting and procedure are systematic and substantial.; the two most important would seem to be:—

- (a) The psychoanalytic consulting room is a highly 'unnatural' place; interactions are extremely structured and ritualised.
- (b) The psychoanalyst can often confirm, discard or modify his interpretations (within the transference relationship) by attending carefully to responses from the patient.

[I am assuming that psychoanalytic procedures can generate reliable and valid data (without stretching the concepts of reliability and validity). I am bound to assume this; the thesis is of no value otherwise.]

Are there arguments which support the straightforward use of psychoanalytic theory to interpret the kind of observational material encountered here? My answer is a cautious 'Yes'. I think the following items may not be irrefutably cogent, but they do have some cumulative plausibility:—

- (1) Psychoanalytic theory claims to be a theory of the constitution and dynamics of mind, as it manifests itself in all persons and everywhere, not just in cases of pathology, or in the consulting room only. It should therefore be applicable to observational settings.

- (2) In the consulting room the psychoanalyst is centrally concerned with therapy. Because of the nature of psychoanalysis understanding is fundamental and ubiquitous; nevertheless it does occur within a therapeutic rather than a research context.
- (3) In our case the observer is not distracted by any therapeutic intention. S/He can concentrate entirely on understanding.
- (4) The observer is in this case a researcher. This means that s/he is not just concerned to answer the question: 'What is going on here?' in all of its potentially enormous detail, but, at least a little more narrowly, 'What is going on here?' insofar as it can possibly connect with the role of the father. Perhaps this is no help in regard to the primary observation material, but it may be a little help in regard to interpretation.
- (5) The researcher can spend a very large amount of total time in writing up and interpreting the material. This enables him/her to pore over the material, checking and rechecking his formulations and interpretations to see that they stand up to critical examination.

Below are a few general comments, on psychoanalytic concepts and their mediation and dissemination.

The theories of psychoanalysis derive in the main from clinical practice, and laboratories of pure psychoanalytic research do not exist. There is no close counterpart to the characteristic institutional continuum of technology and natural science: university laboratory (pure science), industrial research and development (applied science), production line. This lack generates difficulties of understanding outside of the relatively closed world of professional psychotherapy.

Particularly with Kleinian theory the concepts are, at least as first encountered, as bizarre and remote from commonsense as those of the quantum theory of atomic physics. But if one asks to be shown a convincing empirical basis the answer is, in essentials, that this is

not publicly available, being too closely tied to the privacy of the clinical setting. The problems are more contingent than logically necessary, and only the passage of time is likely to dissipate them. With time concepts which are initially shocking can lose this quality as they become assimilated within the culture. One can see how this has happened with some of Freud's pioneering concepts, for example that of infantile sexuality.

It is also worth pointing out that:—

(a) The empirical data which gave rise to quantum theory are exceedingly recondite, and enormously expensive to replicate; for several decades very few people had access to them. By comparison it is child's play to observe at least some of the data which underpin psychoanalysis.

(b) The mathematics of modern quantum theory (wave mechanics, etc.) is far more abstruse than even the most opaque of the writings of Wilfrid Bion.

### 3.3: The Tavistock Method of Infant Observation

The practice of infant observation, the core of the method used in this research, derives from a psychoanalytic way of seeing and understanding, which was initiated by E Bick (1964). It was practised as part of the child psychotherapy training at the Tavistock Clinic from as early as 1949, and has subsequently been used elsewhere in psychotherapy and psychoanalytic training. The formulation of the tenets of infant observation make use of psychoanalytic concepts, and the discussion below utilises this lexicon.

#### 3.31: Tavistock Procedures

The observer visits the family once a week during two years from the birth of the baby. (In the case of this research, observation continued once a week for six months, followed by once-monthly observations for a further five months.) Observation is relatively non-obtrusive: the observer is encouraged to behave as a friendly, self-effacing visitor, and to observe and record whatever is to be seen. The length of each period of observation is 50-60 minutes.



There are no notes taken during the observation, as this is thought to disturb and interfere with the observer's free-floating attention, and to prevent him/her from apprehending the emotional demands, and the impact on each other of those s/he is observing. The recording is done after the observer has finished the observation, preferably as soon as possible afterwards, when the events are still fresh in the observer's memory. The notes cover all external and internal events that happened during the observation, including the observer's associations, states of mind, feelings at different stages, thoughts, and so on. In this sense, the recording of the observations parallels the writing of field notes by anthropologists and sociologists. (Geertz, 1983; Rustin, 1987). The observer is encouraged to observe and record naturalistically in ordinary language, so that the material presented in the first instance in supervision appears in a pre-theorised form. The encoding of material and the development of concepts in psychoanalytic terms is left to the work of the supervision, when writing up of the observations has been completed.

The supervision is taken with a more experienced person (child psychotherapist) who is able to process the experience of the observation better than the observer, because of his/her expertise and because s/he was not physically involved in the observation. The controlled setting of the observations provides some constant features by which different factors can be compared. The method of observation creates an artificial framework within which each period of observation has a beginning and an end. This repetitive pattern makes it possible to differentiate and contrast different factors over time and between cases (Rustin, 1987).

The observer must find his/her own way to a relationship with the mother in which s/he can be friendly, receptive and willing to forego judgemental attitudes, explicit and implicit, and take an uncritical interest in whatever the mother wants to confide about the baby or about her own feelings in dealing with the baby.

The purpose is to observe child development and mother-baby interaction, especially in their implicit emotional dimensions, through considering the whole range of observed experience. The observer watches the baby and whoever is looking after him/her in the ordinary household routine. No special activity or place needs to be designated for the observation. The observer discreetly follows the baby when necessary and when possible when s/he is playing and when s/he is taken to be changed, fed or put to bed. Establishing the setting and its boundaries - for example, the time and duration of each observation, the overall period during which the baby will be observed, the interruption of holidays - is an important task which secures a base from which to start the observation, and to maintain the role of an observer. Undoubtedly the presence of an observer affects the family s/he is observing. It might be experienced by the family as an intrusion and invasion of the family's privacy. It might change the quality of the mother-baby relationship and alter in some way the family dynamics. However, there is some evidence (Harris and Lafey, 1982; Johnson and Bolstad, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that altered routines cannot be maintained over time as the investigator becomes so much a part of the context that he/she can no longer be considered a 'disturbing' element (or at least the degree of disturbance must be minimised) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The observer should avoid participating actively with the baby if possible.

However, it is clear that implicit theorising does affect what is selected to observe and remember, a problem in all types of investigations (Hesse, 1980; Schwartz and Ogilvy, 1979; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979, p.15) point out, 'where we look from affects what we see'. This means that any one focus of observation gives only a partial story.. Any inferences made are dependent on references to, and corroboration by, specific fragments of sequences of material, which are the observed data. Knowledge constructed through this method is distinguished by being grounded in specific moments of experience or in specific emotional references (Rustin 1987). The prolonged engagement, persistent observation and the sequential method of triangulation, enable the investigator to learn the culture, to build trust, and to discard misconceptions

introduced by distortions made by the self or the respondents, thus increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced (Freeman, 1983; Schwartz and Ogilvy, 1979; Johnson, 1975).

Close observation of a mother and a baby is an emotional experience that evokes powerful responses in the observer. These feelings are an essential part of the observation. On the one hand, the observer must come close enough to the people s/he observes for their relationship to have an impact on him/her; otherwise many details will be missed and the quality of the observation impaired. In psychoanalytic theory this falls under the heading of transference and countertransference. (The point being made here is that these concepts apply just as much in infant observation as in the psychoanalytic consulting room). On the other hand, the observer must find a sufficiently distant position to enable him/her to create a mental space in his/her mind to observe what is happening in him or herself (as well as in the mother and baby) in order to make some sense of his/her own feelings and reactions. This will enable him/her to struggle with the difficulties threatening his/her role as an observer. These difficulties come from two main sources:

- 1) The observer's own unconscious infantile desires and dread evoked in the context of the observation (Harris, 1976). These, if not contained and understood, could impair the ability to observe, thereby distorting the observation.
- 2) The projections onto the observer from the people s/he observes. Often the observer has to contain projected anxiety, and to restrain the impulse (countertransference) to act and relieve by advice or support in action. S/he must make a response which indicates to the mother that s/he can appreciate her feelings, without criticising or colluding. Rogers (1951) formulates a similar stance: the establishment of unconditional positive regard whereby all behaviours and statements are accepted without evaluation.

In order to prevent the observation being clouded and distorted, one has to develop the capacity to look inward and outward simultaneously, an aspect of character described by

Bion (1962, p.86) as 'binocular vision'. As M Waddell (1987) points out, this method makes particular demands on the observer, well expressed in Keats' notion, quoted by Bion (1970, p.123) of 'negative capability', the 'capacity to be in doubt and uncertainty, not reached after irritable fact and reason'. Multiple perspectives are needed so that we are not blinded by our biases. Thus, the regular sessions with the supervisor provide an ongoing sequential triangulation. Feelings generated by the impact and intensity of the intimacy of the observation are examined in the supervision. Close attention is given to continuing reflection on the nature of the transference quality of all relationships. Attending to the observer's transference and counter-transference may help to limit the intrusion and distortion of the observation. It may also offer immensely enriched tools for the perception and understanding of the observed phenomena (Bick, 1964; Harris, 1976). Rowan (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1981) recommend the use of a similar method based on a system of debriefing. Essentially, the debriefing system consists of a discussion after each 'field contact', including all the researchers involved, to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, states of mind while being in the field.

Another important goal of the work done in the supervision is to construe the meaning of the experience and the observation. This involves a complicated problem, as very often the detailed interactions observed appear to be ordinary and routine procedures that mothers follow with their babies and random activity on the part of the babies, rather than meaningful behaviour. One of the significant features of this method of infant observation is that a behaviour that seems to be unintelligible at the time becomes intelligible in retrospect in the process of pursuing serial observations. This factor underlies the importance attached to description rather than interpretation. For although some level of inference cannot be avoided at times and will occur (Rustin, 1988), the descriptive language restrains the tendency to interpret, so that a pattern of meaning may emerge over a period of time.

Schefflen (1973) describes a similar method by which, through pursuing the experience of the observation repeatedly, the researcher arrives at a deep understanding of the observed phenomena, an understanding based on the researcher's capacity for continuous receptivity. Stake (1978) and Heron (1981) both argue that the researcher must use his/her tacit knowledge and his/her experiential knowledge at full strength and in the most explicit form; that anything else simply dulls the researcher and reduces the value of enquiry. It is the perspective of psychoanalysts such as Klein (1929), Bion (1962), Winnicott (1971), Meltzer (1981) and some psychologists (Barre, 1981; Bahn, 1971; Bakan, 1972; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that it is the language of the internal world, the inside of things, which throws into relief the meaning of the observed phenomena. The internal world is experienced by the child (and to some extent by the adult as well) as a real place and as much a part of life as the external world (Meltzer 1983). The different figures in the internal world constitute the psychic reality (Isaacs, 1948). In this internal world, meaning is generated and displayed through children's play, drawing and other forms of activity (Bion, 1962).

This method of infant observation is similar in many ways to the naturalistic methods of enquiry that rely on purposeful, rather than representative, sampling, and on emergent design, rather than predetermined design (Lincoln and Guba, 1981; Ford, 1975; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1975).

### 3.32 Procedures of this Research

We have outlined the Tavistock procedures and aims. It is worth noting explicitly the three main ways in which the procedures of this study differ, and to consider the magnitude and implications of these differences.

- (1) A Tavistock observation assignment takes place over a period of two years. The thesis observations each lasted only for six months.

- (2) The aim of the Tavistock procedures is to train the observer in a technique. The aim of the study was not training but research.; the observer had already been trained in the use of the Tavistock method.
- (3) In the Tavistock procedure there is no pre-assigned area of observation of particular interest, either within the observation, or later within the interpretation. In this study there was likewise no focus within the observation, but there was, in the interpretation, a special attention to any element which could be seen as relating to the role of the father.

Is six months long enough to gain a deep enough insight and to generate sufficient material? In retrospect we believe the answer to be 'Yes', considering that our interest was not training but understanding, and that with a limited focus.

### 3.33: Role of the Observer in this Research

There is no doubt that the role of the observer is quite complex in a study of this kind. Below we consider some of the ways in which the presence and actions of the observer might compromise validity; in particular, how they might jeopardise the integrity and value of interpretations. The discussion is couched in the form of objection and answer.

(1) Objection      Fifty minutes of an infant's life is quite short and may be unrepresentative of what happens in normal (unobserved) life.

Answer      Certainly the incidents observed may be in many ways unusual and unrepresentative. However, we are not attempting to construct a typical 'day in the life of...'; instead we are attempting to discern fundamentals, to read off the main features of an

inner world. Since deep structure is invariant over any short period, a competent observer should be able to discover it.

(2) Objection      When an observer is there a mother and infant may present themselves differently; i.e. the presentation may be a function of both observer and observed. How can this be disentangled?

Answer      As with the previous answer, it is not realism or typicality we are after. Much of psychoanalytic training is concerned with using the phenomena of transference and counter-transference to illuminate the dynamics of the internal world.

(3) Objection      The observer may confuse the ease and fluency of relationship, which comes with familiarity and a gradual acceptance of his presence, with the personal development of the infant.

Answer      This is true, and the observer should be cautious about these matters.

(4) Objection      It may be that , in spite of the small amount of input of the observer, nevertheless he does in some cases have a significant effect on the development of the infant.

Answer      This also is true. For example, in a single mother household, a male observer may sometimes be used by the infant, whether the observer wishes it or not, as a surrogate father, in however small a way; and this may advance the infant along the pathway of oedipal resolution. Certainly in this case the observer has contaminated the setting; he has had a significant developmental effect and we cannot infer with any confidence what would have happened without his presence.

However all is not lost. Our *ultimate* thematic aim is to illuminate the role of the father in the family. The above sequence does suggest that his role may well be important, and that his presence or absence may significantly influence an infant's development.

Finally, a brief general comment on validity in relation to psychoanalytically informed observation.

A friend of mine, a neurophysiologist, tells me that the eye of the crab, which she is studying, has an enormous number of synapses (communication nodes attached to cells), but that it takes no more than ten of these synapses to be stimulated for the creature to go on the alert. I believe that there is a similarly huge disproportion between what we can overtly recall, record and interpret of our empirical observation and the amount that has actually been assimilated in some way, mostly unconsciously. It is a human being which is the instrument, not a physical apparatus, and the conscious material we can re-deploy is only the tip of the iceberg. Not only do we assimilate; we are also testing. Vague embryonic hypotheses form and are assailed by the continuous flood of data. A series of misfits and the hypothesis dies. Those which remain to be articulated as interpretations have already passed through severe initiations.

### 3.4. Sample (Study Group)

The general purpose of sampling is to infer the nature of a population from a relatively small amount of data.

'Nature of the population' can be considered under two headings:

- a) Characteristics (attributes).
- b) Relative magnitudes.



There is sophisticated mathematical theory to guide us when, for example, we try to infer the social and demographic aspects of a national population from a 10% random sample. Typically, the information gathered is simple, superficial and objective (age, marital status, occupation, income, household possessions, etc.). Clearly our situation is quite different from this, in that the sample size is small and each case is studied in depth. However, if our theory leads us to believe that the same small number of powerful forces is moulding each member of the population (in this case fatherless infants) then the minuteness of the sample may not be such a severe hindrance to useful inference.

For these reasons the most appropriate method seemed to be a series of six-month, weekly observations constituting case studies of each of the three families. In the field of psychology the intensive study of the individual has had an important place. Allport (1962) argued that psychological research should start with individual behaviour as a science of hunches and then seek out generalisations. Sherwood (1980) stresses that in cases where there are complex and interlocking processes which are under analysis, where the need is to work microscopically and in depth, the study necessarily has to be on a small scale. Hudson (1977) has put the case for very small samples which allow for study in depth. He argues for building up samples from individual studies, one at a time, to enable an understanding of the integration of forces within each individual life, as what can be said about large numbers of people, considered as a whole, is usually rather trivial.

The sample of three families in this research can be said to be both very small but also overwhelmingly large in relation to the volume of observational material, the microscopic analysis attempted and the complexity of the interactive processes to be given conceptual shape.

Similar considerations to those above implicitly inform the work of the naturalistic school within the social sciences. Typical concepts are those of emergent design, grounded theory, and the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1981; Ford, 1975; Glaser and

Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1975). When working within this naturalistic paradigm, typically the researcher does not work with a priori theory or variables: the variables are expected to emerge from the data. This enables the investigator to see which, if any, existing formal theories may help him/her to generate substantive theory, rather than forcing the data to fit a theory. The data accumulated in the field is analysed inductively; that is, the investigator tries to make sense of the information in order to define local working hypotheses or questions that can be pursued.

The method of infant observation provides a different kind of access to interactions and states of mind from that provided through clinical interventions. There is a link with the notion of grounded theory, in that the observations are much less influenced by therapists' definitions of the situation than is the case with clinical material, since the respondents are not given feedback as to what the observers think of them. This method provides a more complete narrative of a development of states of mind than the static picture through projective and other personality tests.

Though data obtained and recorded by the observer is subject to its own modes of selective perception and distortion of memory, it is closer in technique than clinical analysis to conventional developmental psychology, and lends itself more easily than clinical work to public scrutiny and replication. Like other methods based on a naturalistic paradigm, the method of infant observation provides a different kind of explanation and understanding.

Explanation is not in terms of causal links but in terms of pattern theories (Kaplan, 1964). Understanding is not a matter of discovering the links as created by nature, but of imposing the structure that emerges from interaction between investigator and phenomenon.

The criterion for babies and mothers suitable for observation for the purpose of this research is that the mothers are single, with no live-in partner. To begin with, I tried to limit the differences between mothers so that all of the mothers observed would be English-born and Caucasian. This constraint had to be abandoned, as after five months of searching I had only one mother who met both criteria. My impression was that this constraint was not acceptable to the agency whose help I sought in locating single mothers, and was perceived as racial discrimination.

Finding mothers who would be willing to take part in this research and would be reliable in taking on this commitment for six months was also a difficult task. In order to find suitable mothers, I approached the local social services departments in different areas of London as well as post-natal clinics. It seemed that all the agencies were reluctant to help.

Of eleven mothers I approached, five refused to take part in the research when I talked with them on the telephone, even though they gave their social worker or their health visitor permission for me to approach them. One mother failed to be at home and did not respond to letters and telephone calls, although in an initial meeting she had expressed the wish to be observed. One mother changed her mind after the second observation as she felt that 'she might get too attached to me, and there were too many people in the baby's life anyway'. One observation was stopped by me, as after two observations the mother failed to be at home for four consecutive weeks and each time a different excuse was offered, and I decided that she was too unreliable to take part in the research.

The contacts with two out of the three mothers who finally took part in the research were via the local social services department in the area where they were living. One mother was found through a chain of personal contacts.

It is clear that there is no way in which we can see this sample as representative. We have argued however that, even though this is research work, not training, yet the statistical limitations of the sample may well be not so important.

### 3.41: Characteristics of the sample (Study Group)

One mother is 34 years old, white English, and working class. She has two children aged twelve and eleven from a marriage that lasted seven years, and a baby girl, aged 23 months, from a later relationship. The second mother is Indian and was born in Trinidad. She is 29 years old and has a baby girl aged 24 months. The third mother is Israeli, aged 33, and has a baby boy aged 26 months. All the mothers have been single at least from the beginning of the pregnancy of the observed baby, and are living on their own, not with parents. Only one baby has regular contact with her father whom she sees once a week. The other two babies have had no contact with fathers from birth.

All of the mothers live in London, two of them in relatively pleasant council estates, and one in a rented flat, moving later during the period of observation to a flat which she has purchased.

Two of the mothers are working in full-time jobs and one mother is working one or two evenings each week. One baby attends a day nursery from 9 am. to 5 pm. One baby stays at home with her aunt when the mother goes to work; one baby stays at home full time with her mother.

All three babies and their mothers were observed once a week over a period of six months in their own homes. To establish some degree of reassuring routine and to minimise invasive disruption, each observation lasted for 50 minutes, usually on the same day of the week at the same time.

The first six months of weekly observation were followed by monthly observations for a period of six more months, as a gradual process of 'weaning'.

Each observation was written down within fifteen to twenty minutes of the end of the period of observation, in a naturalistic descriptive manner. The records of observation were brought to a supervision with a principal child psychotherapist once every two weeks.

The number of observations during the first six months was seventeen and twenty respectively for two of the babies and 28 observations for the third baby as it was felt that this would further our understanding of the processes involving the baby. The figures for the first two babies are lower than the 26 observations expected because of last-minute cancellations on the part of the mothers: for example, I arrived at the door, and a message was left that the observation could not take place that day as she had to leave.

### 3.5: Sample (Comparison Group)

Originally this study was based on an experimental group only, but eventually it was decided that a deeper understanding (as well as an elimination of possible bias) would result if a comparison group were included. For this reason it was decided to study the development of children in families where both parents were present. This comparison group was selected and studied after the experimental group. The observational schedule therefore consisted of two distinct phases, which were consecutive, not simultaneous.

#### 3.51: Characteristics of the Sample (Comparison Group)

The contacts with two families were via the children's nurseries and one family was found via the health visitor.

One family is white English, working class. The father is in his early thirties and the mother is twenty four. They have three children: one boy aged nine from the father's first marriage, one boy aged five, and a girl aged three. The mother does not work and the father has been unemployed for the last four years. They live on a council estate in North London.

The second family is Indian. Both parents were born and grew up in East Africa. They came to Britain for University studies. The father is in his early thirties and the mother is in her late twenties. They have two girls aged five and three. Both parents are professionals but the mother has not worked since the first child was born. The family lives in North London in a house that they own.

The third family is Israeli. Both parents were born and grew up in Israel. The father had come to London as part of his business activities. The father is thirty seven years old and the mother is thirty four. They have two boys aged four and a half and two. The father is a business man and the mother has not worked since the first child was born. Prior to the birth of the children the mother used to manage a small hotel owned by the family. The family lives in North London in a flat that they own.

Two infants and their families were observed once a week over a period of six months in their own homes. One infant and her family were observed once a week for a period of five months only, as the family changed their plans for the summer holiday and went abroad earlier than planned when they started participating in the research. To establish some degree of reassuring routine and to minimise invasive disruption, each observation lasted for fifty minutes, usually on the same day of the week at the same time.

As with the Study Group sample the first six months of weekly observations were followed by monthly observations for a period of another six months, as a gradual process of 'weaning'.

Each observation was written up within fifteen to twenty minutes of the end of the period of observation in a naturalistic descriptive manner. The records of observation were brought to supervision with a child psychoanalyst once every three weeks.

The numbers of observations during the first six months were 25, 20 and 23 respectively for the three infants.

### 3.6 Glossary of Psychoanalytic Terms

Below are explications of some of the technical terms most frequently used in the later chapters. The terms are briefly defined, concentrating mostly on aspects relevant to our situation.

#### *Internal World*

For the child, a world of the mind as concretely real as is the external world, peopled by intensely good and intensely bad figures. These figures are associated with the (actual external) parents and with parts of the parents' bodies.

#### *Internal Object*

A figure in the internal world, with its own definite characteristics and relationships with other such figures.

#### *Psychic Reality*

This is the internal world in its aspect of meaning and the structure of the whole system.

#### *Unconscious phantasy*

The dynamic aspect of inner life; the transactions of the internal world occurring both when awake and when asleep.

#### *Transference*

The resonance whereby the configuration of one person's internal world is passed across to the internal world of another. That this kind of communication is possible, happens continuously, and that the results can be 'read off' by a trained clinician or observer, is the most fundamental methodological presupposition of psychoanalytic practice.

[It is worth noting that the phenomenon of transference has always been presumed (but not articulated) within common life and within the arts. However, European natural



science developed without any explicit concept of the person, and that is why the notion of transference had to be formally re-introduced.]

### Counter Transference

The modifications (especially the arousal of feeling) within the internal world of the receiver of the transference. By reading off these feelings one can try to deduce the configuration of the transmitter's internal world.

### Paranoid Schizoid Position

A state of the internal world supposedly characteristic of early infancy, but not confined to that period. In this position the internal world is in a state of continuous warfare: on the one side all goodness, love, gratification; on the other evil, hatred, deprivation and destruction. The infant is flooded with fear, pain and rage and is in a state of extreme anxiety, terrified of annihilation. In this war the infant constructs alliances between the good parts of the self and totally good objects( e.g. the 'breast' , as an introjected denizen of the internal world). These alliances oppose the equally extreme bad objects (e.g. the 'absent breast' ,i.e. hunger). Military strategy involves introjection and projection ( of objects of various kinds) for purposes of strengthening, defence, etc.

'Paranoid' because the self is under massive attack; 'Schizoid' because of the splitting of the person into parts.

### Part Object

An individuated element in the internal world which yet derives from only a part of a person ; e.g. the breast ( the mother as all-gratifying, the unalloyed embodiment of givingness). The infant's relation to the part object is one of total self-centredness.

### Projective Identification

A strategy whereby the subject inserts (a part of ) him/herself into an object.....say the mother....in order to communicate with it or to control it.

### Depressive Position

A more mature and complicated position which supervenes upon the paranoid schizoid one; a kind of temporary ceasefire in the never-ending war. The mother, for example, is now perceived as a fusion of good and bad parts. There is ambivalence and a certain sadness at the passing of the violent primary-coloured world of the previous position. (It may happen that the infant may be unable to enter this region, resulting in him/her remaining in a state of manic warfare,i.e. within the paranoid schizoid position.)

### Reparation

The depressive position brings awareness of war damage. No longer continuously terrified of annihilation the infant tries to repair some of this damage done to the loved objects in the earlier frenzied attacks.

### Oedipus Complex

An operatic plot. In its Kleinian version it dates from the first year of life and begins with the onset of the depressive position, i.e. when the child relates to whole persons rather than to part objects.

In its positive form the infant wants the death of its rival ( same sex parent), and sexually desires the opposite sex parent.

In its negative form: love for parent of same sex and hatred for parent of opposite sex.

### Oedipal Resolution

In the boy the incestuous object (mother) is renounced under threat ( castration anxiety).

The girl symbolically equates a penis with a desire, long retained, for a baby by her father.

In both cases renunciation involves an apprehension of the facts of power and law.(Incest is proscribed).

According to psychoanalysis the oedipal resolution is fundamental in the growth and structuring of the personality. The resolution achieved over the next several years will be a main determinant of the quality and robustness of the mature psyche.

### Mental Pain

The emotional aspect of anxiety. Growth will occur via the processing of mental pain, avoiding the mechanisms of splitting, projective identification, idealisation and denial.

### Link

This term (W.R.Bion) takes us along the pathway whose endpoint is thought and knowledge. The primary image is that of the conjoining of two objects in the internal world: the oedipal couple, the nipple in the mouth, the penis in the vagina. This primary image is both symbol and reality, and in one of its aspects it is thought, whose developed linguistic manifestations are the overt articulation of primitive links and linking processes. A central implication of this vision (or model) is that there is an extremely close correspondence between the development of thinking capacity and developments within the internal world. In particular the nature of the oedipal resolution strongly influences the nature of the intellectual capacities achieved. For example, any attack from the outside ( e.g. by a parent) on attempts at a constructive oedipal resolution is concomitantly an attack on thought.

### Identification

The subject assimilates an attribute of an internalised object and is accordingly transformed A series of such identifications leads to the formation of a definite personality.

### Separation

The infant becomes increasingly aware of the independence from itself of some objects (especially the parents). This awareness, within the depressive position, goes along with positive steps towards its own independence along the path of oedipal resolution.

### Containment

The mother, in a state of reverie, receives into herself and contains a frightening element projected by the infant. The mother processes this element (using 'alpha function') and returns it as an unthreatening element to the infant.

### Alpha Function

The process of taking raw sense data and digesting it into items which have meaning, and which therefore can be used for thinking.

### 3.7 Variable Grid

As a summary device it was found convenient to construct a variable grid for each mother and each child. The formats are displayed below.

**Variable Grid: Mother**

<b>Subject: Mother</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
<p>Name of Child:</p> <p>Name of Mother:</p> <p>Single Mother:</p>	<p>1: Loneliness</p> <p>2: Material deprivation</p> <p>3: Low self-esteem</p> <p>4: Lack of emotional support</p> <p>5: Child replacing partner</p> <p>6: Signs of depression</p> <p>7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history</p> <p>8: Supportive network of friends</p> <p>9: Educational level</p> <p>10: Nationality / ethnicity</p>	

## Variable Grid : Child

<b>Subject: Child</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
<p>Name of Child:</p> <p>Name of Mother:</p> <p>Single Mother:</p>	<p>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</p> <p>2: High level of anxiety</p> <p>3: Evidence of failure to separate</p> <p>4: Problems of gender identity</p> <p>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</p>	

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**MINA**

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### **MINA**

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## **4.1 RESULTS: MINA**

### **4.11 The initial contact**

I was put in touch with Susan (a single mother) by the under-5's social worker in social services, in response to my request for help in finding single mothers with babies between six months and two-and-a-half years old, who would be willing to be observed once a week for six months to assist my research on children of single mothers.

Social services wrote to me with a list of five names of single mothers who gave permission for me to contact them. However, Susan was the only one who was willing to meet me to discuss the purpose of the research and the possibility of her and her baby, Mina, being observed. We met a few days later in her flat at a time most convenient for her. I arrived on time but Susan immediately apologised, saying that we would only have a short time to talk as she would need to go to work in about 25 minutes. She told me that she was a nurse at the local hospital.

Susan lives on a big council estate in North London. It is a modern estate consisting of many blocks of flats spread over a large area. The environment looks somewhat dilapidated with pieces of paper here and there, small pieces of broken glass, neglected communal gardens, but not unusual by the standard of inner city estates.. Susan lives on the first floor in the last block of a row of three blocks. Behind it is a playground, a forest and an artificial lake. (Later on I found that one can see this view standing by the window in Susan's living room).

Susan has a slightly dark skin, short straight hair which emphasise the features of her face, especially her big brown eyes. Her expression has a quality of some softness and throughout the time we met she often smiled. She is slim and of medium height. She is in her late twenties. On the whole her presence radiates a maternal, feminine quality.

Sita, who is Susan's niece, is tall and very slim. She wears her long dark hair loose. Her large brown eyes have a soft look, somewhat unlocated or misty. Throughout the meeting she sat at the other end of the room, rather remote and isolated from me and

Susan, though she was listening and observing. The flat was very tidy and had a sense of order and neatness. The corridor from the entrance door to the living room was empty except for a few coats that hung on the wall by the entrance door. The door to the kitchen on the left was closed. The furniture in the living room is sparse and what there is has a modern design so that it does not have a dominant presence, creating a feeling of space, although the room itself is not very big. A serving hatch between the kitchen and the living room and the big window opposite it that overlooks the trees and the wood that is behind the estate contributes to creating a feeling of space. On the left by the wall, close to the serving hatch, there is a small modern dining table. Along that wall there is a cabinet consisting of a few drawers at the bottom, then some shelves with books on the left of it, and in compartments on the right side there are a TV and a stereo system. On the shelves there are a few framed pictures in different sizes of a baby girl. Along the right hand wall there is a light brown sofa and nearby there is a small coffee table with two small armchairs at each end of the table. Behind the armchair at the end of the table close to the window there is a big cardboard box with toys and dolls. Under the window there is usually a baby walker. The tidiness, the type of furniture and its arrangement give a functional and spacious feeling to the room. (See Appendix A p. 284 for a plan).

Susan invited me into the living room and introduced me to Sita - her sixteen and-a-half-year-old niece. She said that Mina was asleep. I told Susan about the purpose of the research 'to try to explore the meaning of the experience of being a child of a single mother'. I told her that if she agreed I would like to come once a week for an hour during the following six months just to be there and to observe whatever it was that was happening at the time that I was there. Susan told me that she worked shifts and that on most of the occasions when I would be there she would not be. Mina would be with Sita, who looked after Mina when Susan worked. When I suggested we could arrange for me to come sometimes when Susan was at home as well, she agreed that it would be possible. She commented that she would like to know whether Mina was different from other children of her age who grew up with their father present. As time was running out because Susan had to go soon, I asked her whether she wanted to know something about

me that perhaps she felt was necessary in helping her make up her mind as to whether or not she wanted me as an observer in her home. She said she knew from her social worker that I was a child psychotherapist carrying out research. She asked me how old I was, whether I had a family and how many children, and finally she asked about the country of my origin. In turn I asked about the people who lived in her flat and Susan said it was only the three of them.

Before I left I said to Susan that as we had had a very short meeting I felt that she should not decide at that moment if she wanted me to come as an observer but that she should take her time to think about it. We agreed that I would phone a week later. I then left.

When I phoned a week later, Susan said it was agreeable to her for me to come, saying that she would be interested to find out if I thought that Mina was different from other children of her age because she was growing up in a single-parent family. I said that I did not think I would be in a position to answer that question, as I was trying to explore the meaning of that experience for the child, but that I would be glad to discuss with her whatever emerges during the observations. She then suggested I should talk to Sita to arrange the time of my first observation.

In retrospect, after six months of observation, I think that my first contact with Susan set the pattern for our future relationship, in that on that occasion I had been allocated a 25-minute slot although it had been Susan who had decided what was the most suitable time for us to meet. The rest of my contact throughout the period of observations was with Mina and Sita. On the occasions when I tried to co-ordinate times for observations when Susan would be at home as well, I found that it was impossible. On the few occasions that we finally managed to find when Susan would be at home when I could come, I never managed to meet her. Either she had to change her shift unexpectedly or she had to go somewhere, giving me her apologies via Sita. Even when I finished the six month observation and twice arranged times to meet her to talk about the observations, Susan was not at home when I came. The first time she forgot and there was no-one at home. The second time she could not come as she had to work. At the

few observations when Susan was at home, it always came as a surprise for me. Either I didn't know she would be there or she came home unexpectedly. Even then, she only spent a short time in the living room and then would go into the kitchen to do some work. I had the feeling that she was constantly avoiding me. Still, whenever I did have contact with her she was always friendly, smiled often, and offered me a cup of tea, interacting all the while on a very casual level. I have never managed to learn about her past, or her present or past relationship with Mina's father. Usually I felt it was not the right situation in which to ask about it, or that it was not part of our contract and therefore that I was not allowed to embark on those issues; otherwise I was risking the whole setting of the observations. Thus, I always felt tantalised and frustrated in my relationship (or rather absence of relationship) with Susan. I experienced her as a very elusive person with whom I was trying to interact.

My relationship with Sita was very similar, though she saw me once a week and was the person who kept the 'administrative' aspect of my relationship with Mina and the family. She was always friendly, asking me some casual questions and offering me a cup of tea. At times when I asked about the family history I felt that I was treading on very dangerous ground, risking crushing the setting of the observations (Observation 3, 13.10.87). As it became apparent after a few weeks of observation, the issue of Susan's relationship with Mina's father was a subject one was not allowed to ask about as there seemed to be feelings of shame attached to it. Thus my role there was very well defined - I was offered a limited slot of time once a week to come to observe but not to interact or to form a relationship based on mutual interest in what Mina was doing and her preoccupations.

#### 4.12. Family background

During the six months of observations I gradually learned about the family history. Susan and the father of Mina have never lived together. A short time after Mina was born, Susan and Mina went to stay with her family in Trinidad. She stayed there until Mina was six months old and then came back to London, leaving Mina with her family in

Trinidad. When Mina was a year old Sita came to London, bringing Mina back with her. Since then, Sita has been looking after her while Mother works. Mina's father is of Indian origin as well. Father comes to see Mina once a week for two hours, but never takes her to his home and family. He lives in London and works for an airline. It seems that this fact is quite significant, as Mina is often preoccupied with aeroplanes. [For example, Observation 5, p. 18, Observation 6, p. 21, Observation 15, pp. 49, 50].

Mina was almost two years old when I started the observations. She is relatively small for her age and thin, but very healthy looking. She has straight dark hair, dark skin and big brown eyes. She has a very lively expression. She is always alert and curious, preoccupied with something in a thoughtful way. Her vitality is very impressive indeed.

From the first observation, Mina was very friendly, relating to me by presenting different objects, toys and books. Doing this, it seemed that she presented to me something of her internal world, her phantasies, feelings and thoughts expressed by the different activities. She accepted me into her activities, including me and sharing with me whatever she was doing. [For example, Observation 3, pp. 8-12: "As I sat down she pushed the boy doll into my hands saying to me 'boy, boy'....She brought different dolls to me, telling me who each of them was as if she was introducing them to me....she brought a doll to the sofa, telling me it was Jane".]

#### 4.13. A summary of a sample of observations

The following is a summary of a sample of observations:

##### Observation 3, 13.10.87, pp. 8-12

As I came in and sat down, Mina brought a boy doll to me and pushed it into my hands, saying excitedly 'boy, boy'. She then brought a book with pictures of different objects and animals and looked at the different pictures. She brought different dolls to the table beside me, mentioning to me what they were, as if she was introducing them to me.

She watched TV for a while. She pushed the walker and brought it next to Sita's legs. She sat on the walker and watched TV very closely and after a while started sucking her

thumb as she watched. As she watched TV I found it difficult to concentrate on Mina and not to watch TV; I managed it only by great effort.

Mina went to the doll's corner and got a doll; Sita held the doll's hands so that Mina could not take it. Mina forcefully pulled the doll and brought it to the sofa. She told me that this is dolly Jane. She lifted the doll's dress and referred to a red mark on its panties, saying to me something about a nappy.

She brought a toy telephone to the sofa, lifted the receiver and dialled saying, 'Mummy talk to Daddy'. She picked up two photo albums, opened them and referred to the pictures, saying 'children' as she looked at the pictures page after page.

I asked Sita whether Mina's parents divorced when she was a baby. Sita said they did. I asked how old Mina was when they divorced. After a few seconds of silence Sita said that they were not married and immediately started watching the TV. I decided not to pursue the questions about this subject as I felt I was not allowed to enquire.

She watched TV for a while. As Mina watched TV, Sita took dolly Jane from the sofa and put it back in the corner. She put a few Duplo parts on the table, saying to Mina, 'Build a tower'. Mina said she didn't want to. She got a ball game on a stick and put a few balls on the short sticks. Mina brought a toy watch and asked Sita to put it on her wrist. Mina came to me, proudly stretching out her hand with the watch, putting it in front of my face and smiling at me. She pointed at the boy doll, saying to me 'boy' and again proudly showed me the watch, smiling as she did so.

She brought a wallet from the drawer, inside which she had a picture of a man in a plastic frame. She pulled the picture out, saying 'Daddy Bill' a few times. She walked around the room holding Daddy's picture above her head and waving it, saying 'Daddy Bill'.

She brought dolly Jane back to the sofa and referred to the red mark on its panties. She wanted Sita to take off the panties but Sita said they did not come off. Mina came to me, showing me the doll, pointing at the red mark, and saying something which I did not grasp.

Observation 5, 27.10.87, pp. 15-18

Mina welcomed me, smiling, with a red purse in the shape of a heart hanging diagonally from her shoulder.

As I sat down I noticed that dolly Jane was resting on the arm of my armchair.

As I sat down Mina said to me, 'dog, dog', pointing at a constructed puzzle of a dog on the table. Her tone gave me the feeling of some urgency. In the centre of the puzzle there was a missing part that Mina had lost.

Mina came very close to me, saying 'purse', and opened it as if she wanted me to look inside. She brought a spade to me and showed me it, holding it in front of my face, smiling. She got a balloon and put it in front of my face, smiling. She hit the balloon with the spade, as if she were playing cricket.

She pushed the walker to me, pointing out to me the balls on its front and the bricks inside.

She took from the drawer a piece of paper, brought it to the puzzle and put it in the hole in the centre. She took an empty basket and put it on her head as if it was a hat.

She picked up a hair clip and put it on her ear as if it were an earring. She did the same with the cover of a felt pen. She came very close to me, lifting her purse to show it to me.

I felt that she expected me to react but as I needed to preserve my position as observer, I avoided doing so.

Mina moved to the cushion, sat down and watched TV, staring in front of her and sucking her thumb. I felt pain in seeing her that way and felt guilty for rejecting her. In a sudden movement Mina pulled herself together. She sat up straight and started counting. Sita told her to say the names of the months and the alphabet, but Mina did not respond. She moved to sit on the floor and with a pencil she touched/stroked the place where the carpet touched the sofa.

She stood up and stirred the pencil and hair clip that she had put in my saucer. As she stirred she suddenly mentioned a policeman who had said hello to her.

As I mentioned that I would go shortly, Mina started shouting angrily and repeatedly 'motorcycle going'. Sita told me that she would go back to Trinidad in February and



asked Mina if she wanted to go with her. Mina said 'no' angrily and fetched an aeroplane which she gave to Sita. [She had received it from her father].

Observation 6, 10.11.87, pp. 19-23

Mother was at home when I arrived. As soon as I sat down Mina pointed at the picture of a train in a book she had brought to me, asking me 'What's this?' Standing close to me and smiling, she stretched out her arm on which she had a bracelet, putting it in front of my face as if to show it to me. Pointing at the picture of a dog and the figure of Kermit in another book she brought to me she asked, 'What's this?'

Mother, who until that moment was standing by the dining room table, said she had work to do. She went into the kitchen, closed the door and watched the events in the living room through the serving hatch.

Mina pushed a big green racing car to the centre of the room. For a while she ran between the front door and the living room, shouting and laughing. I felt she was very excited.

Mina came to Sita and ordered her to write 'B' which Sita did a few times. She brought dolly Jane to me, introducing her to me quietly saying, 'dolly Jane'. She brought the boy doll to me, showing it to me and saying 'boy'. From a plastic bag she took out the wallet with Father's picture and handed it to me. She took a small doll out of the bag - a figure of Mr Strong, and walked it on the carpet.

She stood up and started watching the TV, sucking her thumb and the boy doll as she watched. As the film on TV finished she came to Sita and wanted her to write the letter 'O' many times, and the letter 'E'. She suddenly heard the sound of a plane and ran to the window, looking outside and saying 'aeroplane'. She ran to me and with great excitement said, 'He is coming'. She brought the boy doll to me, asking 'What's this?' She quickly brought to me the wallet, ordering me to pull out the picture. She pulled out the picture, saying 'Daddy Bill'. At that point Mother returned to the living room. Mina started running excitedly between Mother and the window for a long time. As she ran

she picked up a hair band and put it on her head and later on a blue ribbon, one end of which she put in her mouth. Mina stopped running and wanted to play with the model of a windmill but Mother would not allow her to do so even though she protested, screaming angrily.

She brought a photo album to Mother and sat by her, looking at the pictures. She brought a second album to me and looked at the pictures, pointing at the different people in the pictures. She returned to the first album by Mother, pointed at a picture of herself as a baby and suddenly gave a few loud screams. She took the walker to Mother and together they built with the bricks what Mina called a tower, then a box, and then a train.

Observation 7, 17.11.87, pp. 24-28

As soon as I sat down Mina put dolly Jane on my lap. She took two bracelets, put one on her hand saying, 'It's pretty', and gave me the second one to hold. Running, she brought the wallet with Father's picture and gave it to me to hold. She ran and brought to me a book of nursery rhymes, on the cover of which was the picture of a man singing and of Humpty Dumpty. She turned the pages until she got to the picture of a man singing. Pointing at the picture she asked, 'What's this?'

She quickly went to the green racing car, pushing it from one end of the room to the other.

Next to me she drew a circle which she called 'apple', and another circle which she called 'door'. Running, she fetched a spade and gave it to me to hold. Running, she fetched a balloon and pretended she was blowing it into my face. Running, she fetched the boy doll, saying 'boy'. She brought me a picture of herself, asking 'Who is this?' She took the boy doll to Sita and ordered her to 'Write boy'. Sita somewhat reluctantly drew a stick figure. Mina demanded more and more boys, which Sita drew.

At that moment the front door opened and Mother came in. Mina started running excitedly between the living room and the front door and as Mother came in to the living

room, Mina ran between Mother and the TV. As she ran, Mina picked up a pen and used it as a rifle, pretending to shoot Mother, Sita and me, saying 'Snoopy power'. Mina said that Mother would buy her a helicopter. Mother corrected her, saying she would buy her a bicycle. Mother went into the kitchen, closing the door behind her. Mina, still running, put the boy doll on the serving hatch. Mina went on running excitedly for a short time, and then took the boy doll and threw it at Sita. She went to the window and looked outside, saying there was a dog outside. She came to me and told me about a fall she had had, pointing at her forehead and pulling a face as if it was very painful. She moved to Sita and wanted her to draw a boy. She brought the picture of herself to me, asking who it was, and giving it to me to hold. She put the book of nursery rhymes on dolly Jane's tummy and standing there, she started to sing Humpty Dumpty. She pointed at the picture of the King on the cover, saying something about a King. She took her picture from me and brought another picture of herself, giving it to me to hold. She brought me pen and papers, wanting me to draw a man. She excitedly demanded more and more men, each of them to be on a separate sheet of paper. She separated the papers, put them on the serving hatch and started shouting repeatedly, 'Mummy fix'. Mother peeped through the serving hatch and said that Mina had torn the papers. Mina started screaming and scribbled a short line on the wall, shouting repeatedly 'Mummy fix'. Mina continued screaming until Mother came from the kitchen into the living room.

Observation 11, 12.1.88, pp. 34-37

Mina opened the door. Sita was sitting in the armchair in the living room. As soon as I sat down, Mina brought me a puzzle box and told me to construct it. She started constructing the puzzle herself, singing 'ma ma ma ... life is like a dream' as she did the puzzle. After a while she sang to me, 'Dolly Jane ma-ma-ma-ma'. She left the puzzle on the table and moved to the Wendy House. Inside the Wendy House, she put her lips on the window for a few seconds, exhaling on it. She came out, picked the puzzle up and

brought it to me, telling me to do it. She sat on the floor doing the puzzle, humming some tune in which she repeated the word 'father' again and again.

She left the puzzle on the floor and went to the Wendy House, and from there she fetched a tea set which she put on the table. She played 'making tea', giving Sita a cup of tea. Then she took a plate which she said was a slice of bread, spread it with butter, and gave it to Sita, telling her to eat it.

Mina picked up a ping-pong ball from the floor, put it inside the teapot, and said she was cooking an egg. She quickly piled up all the plates and excitedly started to count them: '...13, 17, 19, 14, 18 ...'. She brought all the plates to me and put them on my knee. She ran to the stereo, put in a cassette of children's songs, and started dancing, smiling and making faces at me. She then moved to the stereo, took out her cassette and put in another cassette with classical music. Sita told her that it was Mother's cassette and she knew she was not allowed to play it. Mina put on the stereo and started to dance, making what she called 'disco movements'. She danced for three or four minutes. As she danced her panties showed and each time it happened Sita told her to pull up her trousers. She stopped dancing, came to the table, took two plates which she put face to face as if they were a sandwich, and put it to her mouth saying she was biting the butter. Again she played 'cooking an egg'.

Observation 14, 1.2.88, pp. 42-46

As soon as I sat down Mina brought me a stick with rings. From the Wendy House she also brought a Duplo house, saying that Mother would buy her a pony. She took the chimney off and put it on and again said that Mother would buy her a pony. She brought a Calpol spoon and a badge, played with them as if she were eating from a plate and then tried to feed me, saying it was an egg. She put the badge inside Mother's stereo as if it were a cassette. She fetched bracelets and then a spade which she put inside the bracelets. She went to the toilet and when she came back she started searching

hectically inside the Wendy House, talking to me as she searched, as if she wanted to draw my attention to something inside the Wendy House. She started tilting and shaking the Wendy House, looking inside and then tilting it again. From the Wendy House she took the mouthpiece of a whistle which she gave to me. She went on tilting the house, once in a while putting her head inside as if she were checking something inside, and then went on tilting. She picked up a yellow top and put it inside the Wendy House. She continued tilting and shaking the house and I felt that it had some quality of urgency. She took the mouthpiece inside and whistled, bending over the toys. Still inside the house she started speaking urgently, repeating the words 'gone, gone', and started shooting with a rifle she found there, saying: 'shot, shot'. She came out of the house and brought to me a book, saying urgently 'man, man'. She opened the book which contained drawings of men.

With the buckets and the spade she played 'going to the beach' and then started turning around until she became dizzy and could hardly stand up. She went and stood on a stool, hugging a doll which she had fetched, talking to the doll as she hugged it.

She got the puzzle of the dog and wanted Sita to help her to construct it, but Sita told her to do it herself. Mina, still holding the puzzle box in one hand, sat on the sofa sucking her thumb, staring into space as her expression slowly changed and her eyes lost their focus. The sequence evoked painful feelings in me. After some time she pulled herself together, straightening herself in a sudden abrupt movement, and managed to construct the puzzle, a picture of a dog.

She went and stood on Sita's knees as she had done on the stool. She came to me, calling me 'daddy' and said she wanted to climb on my knee. She got a Milky Way and, coming to me and referring to me again as 'daddy', she said: 'bye bye chocolate'. She opened the tape recorder and put the chocolate inside. It was time to stop and as they followed me to the door Mina blocked it with the curtain, referring to me as 'daddy' and then sadly said 'daddy gone'.

Observation 15, 9.2.88, pp. 47-50

Mina came running to the door, holding a magic screen. She said to me 'look', pointing at it. As I sat down she handed me the magic screen, telling me to draw a house. She added a circle in the middle of the door of the house I had drawn, saying 'door'. She rubbed it off and demanded another house. I suggested that she should draw the house and she scribbled something which she called a fish. She demanded that I draw another house, which I did. As I drew she began watching TV. She rubbed off the house and looking at me she pointed at a black spot on the board that did not come off and said that she had done it. She turned to the TV and started watching it for a few seconds. She then came to me and said 'I want a swing'. Sita told me that she was puzzled as they did not have a swing at home.

Mina brought me a stick with rings. She started taking off the rings, putting them on my knee and I held them. She started talking gibberish as she took the rings off. Sita told her to count the rings and Mina moved over to her, where she counted them and put them on the stick according to size. She brought plasticine and cutting patterns for me to hold, one of them in the shape of a fish. She fetched a toy telephone, dialled and put the receiver to my ear. She ran to the entrance door, came back and standing behind my chair and touching the support she screamed as if there were something frightening or exciting. She ran to the front door and stood there covering herself with curtain, talking gibberish.

She came back into the room and started watching TV, leaning on the corner of the table. As she watched she started masturbating and sucking her thumb. After a while she lay on the sofa on her back, staring into space. In a sudden movement she stood up, took a nut that was on the table and ordered Sita to crack it. Sita refused to fetch the nut cracker and then told Mina to ask nicely. Mina asked a few times until it was accepted by Sita as 'nicely enough' and then she cracked the nut which Mina ate.

Mina brought dolly Jane to me, hugging her and saying to me 'dolly Jane'. She went to the serving hatch, lifted the doll as if to show her what was there and started talking to the doll. She took the doll to the window and holding it facing the window she told the

doll that it was raining outside. She started explaining something to the doll, then suddenly stopped the conversation with the doll and said that she wanted to be on a Concorde. Sita told me that Mina had seen a TV programme about a retarded boy who 'dreamt all his life that he was on a Concorde and some rich man bought him a ticket'. As Sita was telling me the story Mina pointed to the sky saying 'Concorde, Concorde'. This developed into a conversation with Jane - Mina pointing at the sky showing Jane the Concorde. This lasted for a while and evoked very painful feelings in me. Sita looked outside and said that there was not any plane in the sky. Mina put the doll down and stood there staring looking at the rain. [I felt painfully that she was defeated, that she had lost her endurance.] She looked outside and said: 'I want to fly with the wind. I want to jump down. I want to jump into the water outside'. She said she wanted to get a fish and went to the front door. She came back into the living room, saying she was looking for a box to put the fish, and picked up a plastic bag from the floor.

#### 4.14. Emerging patterns

As observations proceeded, a few patterns emerged regarding the structural development of the observations, and the toys and objects with which Mina was preoccupied. These patterns emerged over a period of time.

The following is a summary of the main patterns as they emerged over time.

##### 4.141. Watching TV

A shift from the activity with which Mina was preoccupied, into watching TV, appeared in most of the observations, at times more than once. [Observation 3, p.8 (x2), Observation 5, p.17, Observation 6, p.21, Observation 14, p.45, Observation 15, pp. 47 and 48].

Often, as she was watching TV, it was followed by sucking the thumb, at times masturbating (Observation 15, p. 48). At other times it was followed by a situation where she lay on the sofa sucking her thumb, staring into space with an expression that caused one to feel that her eyes had 'lost their focus' (Observation 14, p.45).

It seems that these states always appeared after a sequence during which she was intensely preoccupied pursuing some personal issue she was trying to process. I often found it painful to observe her in these states and it seems that it reflected her feelings (Observation 5, p.17; Observation 14, p.45; Observation 15, p.48). The length of these sequences varied from a few seconds (Observation 15, p.47) to five minutes (Observation 15, p.49).

The shift to the next situation often came suddenly, in contrast to her state while watching TV, and I experienced it as: 'she suddenly pulled herself together' (p.17; p.45; p.48). It was then followed by an activity like 'counting', which seemed to be arbitrary, the meaning of which was difficult to fathom (Observation 5, p.17; Observation 15, p.48). At other times the shift seemed to be more 'natural' or 'smooth'. In its quality, her preoccupation appeared to be a continuation or a development of the sequence that had happened before she turned to the TV (Observation 3, p.8; Observation 6, p.21; Observation 14, p.45; Observation 15; p.47). As it emerged it looks as if watching TV in these contexts was a way of touching safe base, or avoiding an emotional pain which seemed to be linked to her preoccupation before watching the TV.

#### 4.142 .The development of the observations and the use of objects

As it emerged in almost all the observations, Mina would present me an object or some toys as soon as I arrived or as soon as I sat down.

The objects she introduced, at times adding a comment like 'Look!' (Observation 15, p.47) or 'What's this?' (Observation 7, p.24) seemed to be Mina's way of "putting an issue on the agenda". It seemed that this was an issue she was struggling to think about and work through. Thus for example (Observation 3, p.8): 'As I sat down she brought me the boy doll'. (Observation 5, p.15): 'She welcomed me with the purse on her shoulder and dolly Jane was in the armchair. As soon as I sat down she said dog, dog, pointing at the puzzle'. Following the object she had introduced unfolded the rest of the observation which seemed to be a process of thinking, trying to work through some relationships and ideas represented by the different objects and activities on which she focussed.



#### 4.143 Mina's agenda versus Sita's agenda

As I pointed out, Mina almost always was playing with objects and activities that she initiated and which seemed to be linked to herself, her own agenda. However, often Sita suggested/told Mina to do something which appeared to be quite different to Mina's activity at that moment.

As it transpired, these interventions of Sita appeared in situations involving Mina's preoccupation with issues that seemed to be quite 'delicate' and linked to Father. Thus, Observation 3, p.10: After a sequence during which Mina was preoccupied with the red spot on dolly Jane's panties and then a statement about 'Father talk to Mother', Sita took the doll away, telling Mina to build a tower. Observation 16, p.53: When Mina was singing and mentioning 'Father', Sita told her to say Humpty Dumpty.

Still, Mina pursued her own agenda, refusing to follow Sita's instructions. Thus, she brought out her watch, followed by the boy doll, Father's picture and dolly Jane (Observation 3), and again the watch (Observation 16).

The same pattern emerged at times when Mina was watching TV and it seemed to be linked to a feeling of pain as it was reflected in the countertransference (Observation 5, p.18; Observation 16, p.53). Often in these situations Sita reprimanded Mina for sucking her thumb (Observation 14, p.45; Observation 15, p.48), trying to encourage Mina to move on to another activity - 'Are you going to do something with the plasticine?' (p.48).

#### 4.144 The introduction of objects representing father

Throughout the period of observations, Mina often played with objects that appeared to represent Father. Those objects were mainly: The boy doll (Observation 3, pp. 8, 10; Observation 6, pp. 20, 21; Observation 7, pp. 25, 26). Father's picture (Observation 3, p.11; Observation 6, pp. 20, 21; Observation 7, p.24). The racing car (Observation 6, p.20; Observation 7, p.24). The aeroplane (Observation 5, p.18; Observation 6, p.21; Observation 15, pp. 49, 50). The toy watch (Observation 3, p.10; Observation 16, pp. 53, 54). An imaginary dog and a dog puzzle (Observation 5, pp. 15, 16; Observation 6, p.19;

Observation 7, p. 26; Observation 14, p. 45). The toy telephone (Observation 3, p. 10; Observation 15, p. 48).

From the history of the objects (the racing car, the aeroplane), from the statements of Mina that were linked to them (the telephone, the dog, Father's picture), and above all from the context in which they appeared in the single observations and over a period of time, it seemed that in using these objects Mina was trying to introduce the absent father into her household. Thus, for example: Observation 6, pp. 19-21, she asked me 'What's this?' referring to the picture of a dog in a colouring book. Later on she gave me the boy doll, saying 'boy', and then brought to me the wallet with Father's picture to hold. Later on she heard the sound of an aeroplane and ran to the window, looking outside. She then ran to me and in great excitement announced: 'He is coming'. She gave me the boy doll, saying 'What's this?'. She opened the wallet with Father's picture, pulled the picture out and announced: 'Daddy Bill'.

It is interesting to note that there was some change in these objects. Father's picture didn't reappear after the 8th observation and it seems that the objects representing him during the second half of the period were aeroplanes, dogs and the watch.

## 4.2 DISCUSSION: MINA

### 4.21 Variable Grid

<b>Subject: Mother</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
<p>Name of Child: Mina</p> <p>Name of Mother: Susan</p> <p>Single Mother: Yes</p>	1: Loneliness	Yes – moderate degree
	2: Material deprivation	No
	3: Low self-esteem	Yes – related to stigma
	4: Lack of emotional support	Some lack – supported by teenage nephew
	5: Child replacing partner	No
	6: Signs of depression	Not observed – more tiredness than depression
	7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history	Insufficient information
	8: Supportive network of friends	No
	9: Educational level	Middle level
	10: Nationality / ethnicity	Indian (Hindu) culture – from the Caribbean

**Variable Grid**

<b>Subject: Child</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
<p><b>Name of Child:</b>     <b>Mina</b></p> <p><b>Name of Mother:</b>   <b>Susan</b></p> <p><b>Single Mother:</b>     <b>yes</b></p>	<p><b>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</b></p> <p><b>2: High level of anxiety</b></p> <p><b>3: Evidence of failure to separate</b></p> <p><b>4: Problems of gender identity</b></p> <p><b>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</b></p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p> <p><b>Moderate – mainly in relation to father’s absence</b></p> <p><b>No</b></p> <p><b>Yes – in the integration of bi-sexual gender identifications</b></p> <p><b>No siblings</b></p>

#### 4.22. The link with the observer

The six months of weekly observations of Mina seem to be a description of the struggles of a little girl to pursue her thinking about her missing father, trying to process and make sense of the painful experiences of this part of her life. Throughout this period one has a clear sense of Mina as a little girl reaching out to find truthful answers, settling for nothing less, as she manages to find inside herself the resources for this struggle.

Attending to the personal development of the girl throughout these observations, one is reminded of Bion's notion about truth being necessary for the nourishment of the personality (Bion 1965). It seems that this struggle of Mina corresponded to my feeling in the counter-transference (as described on pp. 89-90 of the Results section), of being put by Sita and Susan in the position of a father struggling to get access to the child. Mina, on the other hand, defined my role as an observer rather differently. From the first observation she presented me with different toys and objects, often trying to include me in her play. Thus she seemed to be saying: 'I will present you with my intimate feelings, the thoughts that preoccupy me, and you will think about them'. Throughout the period of observation Mina seemed to use me as a container gathering her thoughts (Bion 1962). For example: (Observation 3, 13.10.87, pp. 8-12), 'She brought a boy doll to me .... she introduced the dolls to me .... she put her hand with the watch in front of my face'.

#### 4.23. The red spot

Considering the fact that I was not given much information about Father, the parents' past relationship, and my feeling that I was not allowed to discuss these subjects, it seems plausible to assume that Mina has no more information about it than I have. For example, (Observation 3, p. 9): 'I asked about the parents .... I felt I was not allowed to enquire'. As it emerged in the observations this was an area blocked for thinking. In the observations it took the form of a red spot on dolly Jane's panties. Thus (Observation 3, p. 9): 'When Mina lifted the doll's dress, pointing at the red spot, trying to turn my attention to it, she was distracted by Sita, who took the doll away and told her to build a tower as she introduced other toys'. The red spot, which may have represented blood,

seemed to symbolise an aspect of the parents' relationship; that is, the shame of Mother being an unmarried single mother, a status which is strongly stigmatised in the family's Indian culture. And perhaps this was the reason that Sita lied to me, telling me that the parents had divorced (Observation 3, p. 9). (See also Appendix A, pp. 59-61).

Still, Mina struggled to be herself, to deal with her own agenda, rejecting the toys and activities that Sita introduced and bringing back toys and objects that were linked to herself. Thus, (Observation 3, p. 10): 'She refused to build a tower and brought back a watch, Father's picture, (which she held, waving, as she said "Daddy Bill"), and finally dolly Jane'. These objects seem to represent thoughts about Father and a wish to be allowed to think about him without restrictions. In her constant search for truth she sometimes turned to me. For example, (Observation 3, p. 10): '.... She wanted Sita to take the doll's panties off but Sita said they could not come off. Mina came to me, showing me the doll, pointing at the red spot'.

#### 4.24 The struggle to think about Father

In the following observations, Mina was pursuing her thinking about the missing father, processing this area of her experience. A missing part in the centre of the puzzle which she constructed (Observation 5, 27.10.87, pp. 15-18) becomes the heart of the matter: the hole seems to represent the absent father. 'Trying to fit a piece of paper in the hole in the centre of the puzzle' (Observation 5, p. 15), Mina seemed to be trying to consider what could replace the missing object. She seems to be thinking that a similar object that had similar characteristics (the piece of paper) might help. It looked as if Mina expects me to be the father who 'would fill the hole in the puzzle'. 'Putting a hair clip on her ear.... and relating to me in a flirtatious manner' (Observation 5, p. 16), she seemed to have a phantasy that had she been a mature woman 'with ear rings', I would 'fill the empty space'. When this phantasy collapsed (Observation 5, p. 16): '.... and I felt guilty for rejecting her....'), she seemed to be mourning the phantasy that two objects could join together: I and she, mummy and daddy. The process of mourning consisted of shifts between depressive state of mind (Observation 5, p. 16 '.... she touched/stroked the place where the

carpet touched the sofa ....') and omnipotent magic, (Observation 5, p. 16: 'If she stirred two objects together in my saucer she got a policeman daddy'). (See also Appendix A, pp. 62-63).

In the observations that followed it seemed that Mina continued trying to link two objects together to create a couple, as if she wanted to create an Oedipal situation (i.e. male adult, female adult, plus child). It took the form of running between the objects she wanted to link in her phantasy. When Mother and I were in the same space, Mina became very excited, running around, running to bring different objects and running from one activity to another. Still, Mother detached herself from the situation Mina was trying to create by moving to another room. For example (Observation 6, 10.11.87, pp. 18-23): '...She brought to me a book .... Mother went to the kitchen, observing the events in the living room from the serving hatch .... Mina was running and shouting .... She brought dolly Jane .... She handed to me Father's picture .... She looked outside, saying "aeroplane" with great excitement, and "he is coming" .... She looked at the pictures in the family album with Mother .... She looked at another album she had brought to me ....'. Mina seems to have a wish to be part of a couple, that is, to be included in the atmosphere of a relationship between the parents, to be a part of a family where she is contained by two parents. The element of Oedipal rivalry, the wish to replace one partner in the couple seems to be absent in that situation. Looking at pictures of herself as a baby, with me and with Mother, seems to be linked to Mina's feeling that very early on, Mother and Father had been together, and perhaps she wanted to repeat this good feeling by looking at the pictures. Still, Mina seemed aware that Father is missing and wishes that he would 'come by aeroplane'. (See also Appendix A, pp. 64-66).

#### 4.25. The disaster for integration

In the following observations a complicated emotional situation emerged. I think that the following may have been happening. Mina is trying to understand what it is that Father finds interesting and attractive in his children and what it is that drives him away from them. It seems to be the focus for Mina's central conflict in relation to the father being

absent and the implications of this experience for Mina. The situation is perhaps best demonstrated by Observation 7, 17.11.87, pp. 24-28. 'As I sat down, Mina put dolly Jane on my lap .... She gave me Father's picture to hold .... She drew a circle which she called "apple" .... She brought the boy doll, saying "boy" .... She brought me a picture of herself .... She gave the boy doll to Sita, telling her to write boy .... Mother came in .... Mina picked up a pen and used it as a rifle .... Mother went into the kitchen, closing the door behind her .... Mina put the boy doll on the serving hatch .... Mina told me about a fall she had had .... Mina started to sing Humpty Dumpty .... saying something about a king .... She took her picture from me and brought me another picture of herself, giving it to me to hold .... She started shouting repeatedly, "Mummy fix" .... until Mother came from the kitchen into the living room'.

It would seem that the objects with which Mina presented me, for example, dolly Jane, the bracelets, Father's picture, the two circles, the spade, the balloon, and the boy doll, correspond to an exploration of the differences and similarities between a boy and a girl, male and female, and the way they are linked together. It appears as if Mina is trying to understand how a boy is created and how a girl is created; how can a girl turn into a boy? It appears that by introducing the boy doll, Mina was struggling with the thought that I prefer boys, that had she been a boy, then Father would have stayed. Or perhaps she was wondering whether I keep her in my mind even though she is a girl: the picture of herself she brought to me, asking me "who is this?". Throwing the boy doll to Sita and demanding her to draw more and more figures of a boy seems to be a demand for some answers relating to these questions. Mother came back from work tired and was not able to accept the emotional events that she probably sensed were taking place. Perhaps this is why she referred to Mina's breakfast. Mina was constantly moving at that point, probably searching for answers to the questions that were evoked by my arrival. As she did not get the answers from Mother she went on searching by herself: 'the pen she used as a gun, the snoopy power'. In doing it, Mina seems to be identifying with maleness, turning to Mother, asking her to accept the male identifications and to make space for them, 'the helicopter Mother would buy her for Christmas'. Mother detached herself



from the situation, 'taking shelter in the kitchen', and that was probably a counter-transference reaction to the boy part that Mina pushed on to Mother. 'Putting the boy doll on the serving hatch', it looks as if Mina is presenting her burning questions to Mother: 'Would you stay with me if I were a boy? Would Father have stayed then?'. The answer in Mina's mind was inherent in the question and was confirmed by Mother's reaction in detaching herself from the situation. That is: 'Mother cannot stand the boy part of Mina and therefore Father is not here. Had Mother been able to stand it, then Father would have been here'.

At that point, Mina referred to 'the dog outside', and then followed it by mentioning the fall she had had and how painful it was for her. That brought up some feeling of desperation about a missing 'Daddy King', and a disaster, the collapse to an irreparably disintegrated Humpty Dumpty. Father being absent seems to be experienced by Mina as a disaster for the integration of the different parts of herself, both male and female identifications. Struggling with the nature of identification under these circumstances, she turns to me as an observer, bringing to me the pictures of herself taken in different periods of her life. The pictures seem to represent the little girl and the woman parts of herself held in Father's mind and in my mind. She seems to be inquiring whether I could contain in my mind her different identities. This emphasises Mina's double dilemma; It seemed that mother could not contain Mina's male identity. However, in one of Mina's versions, Father left because she was a girl and not a boy. In that sense, saying 'Humpty Dumpty' is likely to be an expression of her guilt for causing the collapse of her parents' relationship and for the absence of Father. When she wanted me to 'write men', she seemed to be saying that perhaps had there been more men other than me, that could have helped. She separated the sheets of paper and then wanted Mother to 'fix it', to put them together again. By doing it, she seemed to be asking Mother to 'put Humpty Dumpty together again', to accept and contain the different identities of Mina. Mother had not understood it and she blamed Mina for 'breaking the pages'. In so doing, she seemed to be saying: 'I have no connection with this, you broke it and you are going to repair Humpty Dumpty'.

Throughout the observation it seemed as if my presence there evoked Mina's confusion about her identifications and identities. It looked as if Mina's phantasy is that if she manages to bring together the different parts of herself, then she would manage to bring mummy and daddy 'together again', and vice versa. She was using my presence there to create symbolic thoughts to enable her to process this phantasy. (See also Appendix A, pp. 67-71).

#### 4.26 Exploration of Oedipal triangular relationships

In the following observations Mina appeared to be creating Oedipal situations, experiencing and exploring in her activities triangular relationships. Perhaps I performed an important function in those situations. In the room I represented Mother's partner, with whom Mina was not allowed to have a relationship. Possibly I stimulated Mina's phantasy that Mother had an internal daddy to whom she, the mother, was relating at times and to whom Mina was not allowed to relate. In her activity Mina seemed to be busy with triangular Oedipal relationships, testing boundaries, trying to find out at which point it was not permissible to go further. Thus, she was playing with objects that belonged to Mother, and in her phantasy belonged to Mother and someone else (internal father figure), with whom she was not allowed to play. For example: 'In playing Mother's cassettes, changing the radio stations, putting a badge inside Mother's tape', (Observation 11, 12.1.88, pp. 34-37), Mina was crossing boundaries.

Elaborating the phantasy about mummy's and daddy's relationship appears to be another aspect of crossing boundaries. Mina was allowed to do that so long as the phantasy was not too explicit and it was not evident what it really concerned. From Sita's and Mother's points of view, it is unthinkable and has to remain so. Thus, for example, (Observation 11, p. 37): 'Mina was dancing .... a few times Sita told her to pull up her trousers as her panties were showing'. It looks as if my presence there was essential to elaborate that phantasy and to think about it at all.

It could be that being able to think about the parents' relationship enables Mina to elaborate Oedipal phantasies - a 'baby egg' appeared to be part of the parents' relationship

and a 'butter sandwich' intercourse. Thus (Observation 11, p. 36): '... She put the ping-pong ball inside the tea pot saying she was cooking an egg .... She put the two plates face to face as if it were a sandwich and said that she was biting the butter'. This intercourse she attacks by 'biting the butter', the interface, the layer of contact, the heart of the intercourse that excludes the baby.

#### 4.27 The combined object and an experience of a retarded part of the self

As observations proceeded Mina seems to be preoccupied in her activity with a combined object (Klein 1932), an object can become complete only if one adds to it some other essential part Her preoccupation seems to be with completion and incompleteness. The combined object takes the form of two objects that are in some relationship to each other: 'House and chimney, stick with rings, bucket and spade, spoon and a badge' (Observation 14, 1.2.88, pp. 42-46).

In Mina's mind there appears to be an object that is missing from the combined object: 'The rings she took off, the chimney she took off, and a reference to finger rings she said she would bring from the Wendy House'. (Observation 14). 'Tilting and shaking the Wendy House, searching frantically inside it and again tilting and shaking the house' (Observation 14), Mina seems to be searching for the missing object. Without it the 'house was shaking and there was no roof over the dolls'.

As Mina's preoccupation with the combined object continues, it appears to take a different form. She becomes preoccupied with the characteristic of that object as being a containing object (Bion 1962). This constellation and its implications for Mina is perhaps best demonstrated by Observation 15, pp. 47-50: 'Mina came to the door holding a magic screen .... she told me to draw a house. She added a circle in the middle of the door .... she scribbled something which she called a fish .... She pointed at a black spot on the board which did not come off and said that she had done it .... she watched the TV .... she came to me saying that she wanted a swing .... She took the rings off the stick, putting them on my knee .... Sita told her to count the rings .... She brought plasticine and cutting patterns for me to hold, one of them in the shape of a fish. She brought a toy telephone,

dialled and put the receiver to my ear .... she ran to the front door and stood there covering herself with the curtain, talking gibberish .... she started watching TV masturbating and sucking her thumb .... she lay on the sofa staring into space .... she picked a nut and ordered Sita to crack it. Sita told her to ask nicely .... She took dolly Jane to the window and told the doll that it was raining outside. She started explaining something to the doll .... She said that she wanted to be on a Concorde .... the story about a retarded boy who dreamt all his life that he was on a Concorde and some rich man bought him the ticket .... Mina pointed at the sky saying, "Concorde, Concorde" .... She showed dolly Jane the 'Concorde' .... Sita looked outside and said that there was no plane in the sky .... Mina put the doll down and stood there staring at the rain .... She said, "I want to fly with the wind. I want to jump down. I want to jump into the water outside". She said she wanted to get a fish and went to the front door. She came back saying she was looking for a box in which to put the fish and picked up a plastic bag'.

The house Mina wanted me to draw seems to represent a container, perhaps a containing object (Bion, 1962). The circle she added to the door seems to represent a breast-nipple container, a part object of a combined object (Klein, 1932). She rubbed it off and then scribbled what she called a 'fish', probably just in order to satisfy me, and then again she wanted me to draw a house. The fish was perhaps representing her version of a containing object that she was unable to create at that point. Asking me to draw a house again she seemed to be saying: 'you are going to supply the containing object'.

The reference to the black spot on the top layer of the board seems to reflect her feelings that she had caused some permanent damage to the container, some perfect containing 'breast-nipple' was damaged irreversibly. The object that could rub off every scribble which was represented by the top layer of the board was damaged. 'She then watched the TV for a short time and said she wanted to swing'. The swing she wanted seems to be a wish for a physical container, an experience of being rocked on the knees like a baby, a rocking that mitigates the damage caused to the container. This is perhaps the link to the rings she put on my knee.

After a sequence during which she was mobilised temporarily by Sita - 'putting and counting the rings', she moved to the plasticine, rejecting the experience Sita was offering her.

There seems to be a link in terms of unconscious phantasy between the plasticine, the telephone and running to the hall covering herself with the curtain. The plasticine and the biscuit cutter in the shape of a fish which she brought to me seem to be again a request for a containing object. Without it she seems to feel exposed to the mental pain which was the result of missing an absent object - 'the telephone', probably a reference to someone who was not there. Standing behind the curtain she seems to be covering herself so as not to be exposed to that mental pain.

It seems as if when she does not feel contained by an internal object, she regresses to a narcissistic state, covering herself with the curtain, and then the whole sequence on the sofa sucking her thumb and watching the TV, that seems to be an escape to mindlessness.

The nut she 'suddenly picked up from the table' seemed to be an effort to concentrate on something tough and hard. The sequence that developed at that point with the nut cracker seems to be a matter of mobilising psychic energy towards punishment and toughness: 'who would get the cracker', and 'ask nicely'.

Looking carefully and softly after dolly Jane she seems to be looking after the 'dolly Jane part of herself' in an opposite way to the experience she had just had with Sita. It appears that she is mobilising herself to work through the feelings of the bad experience she had had, 'taking the doll to the window and showing her the bad weather outside'.

The comment about 'being on Concorde' seems to be a reflection of two phantasies: had Father been there, it would have relieved the situation, and flying with daddy. That was perhaps the content of her phantasies when she was on the sofa. The reference to the retarded boy seems to relate to a feeling about a retarded part of herself, a result of not having Father living there.

Then came the sequence in which she was standing by the window with the doll, pointing at the sky, saying Concorde and talking to the doll, a sequence which evoked a

very painful feeling in me. It seems that my pain reflects her feeling, as she was probably aware that there was no plane in the sky. It seems that what she was saying is: 'My father is as far as the stars in the sky'. Then she was explaining to the doll the situation as it actually was. Doing that, it seems as if one part of herself is explaining to another part that it is literally as far as the sky. There is no father.

'Flying with the wind' and then the continuation of the sequences do not seem to be an expression of an omnipotent phantasy, but an expression of her wish to have a father who can deal with depressive pain to which she feels so exposed and against which she defends herself in the first half of the observation. In the whole sequence, followed by the shift to 'the fish she wanted to bring' she seemed to be saying, 'I know I cannot fly in the sense of having a father who counteracts the depressive pain'. It appears that this is actually a working through of the depressive pain that earlier in the observation she was not able to process but escaped to mindlessness - the sequence on the sofa, watching the TV. The 'fish' is a success in creating for herself a containing object, which presumably is the link to the fish biscuit cutter and the plasticine she had brought to me at the beginning of the observation. (See also Appendix A, pp. 72-82).

One's impression is that Mina's damaged part - the 'retarded boy part of herself', would be obliterated, as the drawing board did, had she managed to find Father. In her search for an object that gives meaning, she seems to be like a 'fish out of the water' in her environment, in which the dominant culture is to 'count' as Sita made her count the rings. The absence of Father is ever-present throughout the observations but it looks as if Mina has the internal resources to come to terms with it. Continually she is trying to negotiate with the facts of her life. From the observations one clearly gets a picture of a girl who can learn from her experience rather than about things (Bion, 1962).

#### 4.28 Summary

I described the child's difficulty in thinking about the father outside of the restrictions imposed by the mother and Sita. Once she started exploring this area of her experience Mina's difficulty emerged: the integration of the bi-sexual gender identifications. The

absence of the father seems to be experienced as a deficiency in the self, a 'retarded boy' part of the self, and to generate a feeling of incompleteness. There seemed to be a phantasy of Mina that had father been there she would have managed to integrate her gender identifications, and vice versa.: that had she managed to integrate the boy and girl parts of herself in a manner acceptable to the mother, then the father would have been there.

Throughout the observations there is a constant search on Mina's part for a container for her thoughts. In her specific case, there is no-one who can give meaning to her experiences. She seems to be trying to use the observer as a container to gather her thoughts, perform Alpha function for her (Bion, 1962).

It would seem that the internal processes are integrally connected with the wider social context. Something like the following could be going on:—

(1) Mina's difficulties in thinking about the father and the parents' relationship seem to be strongly linked to a cultural fact, namely the stigma of being an unwed mother in the Indian community. This cultural factor was central in the emotional constellation that the discussion focussed upon. This also connects with the difficulty in accommodating the observer, the inability of the adults to achieve a comfortable relationship with him.

(2) Although the mother's seventeen year old niece was there to assist her, the mother was on the whole lonely, lacking support from an adult partner, and working long hours to support the family.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**MARK**



## CHAPTER FIVE

### MARK

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## **5.1 RESULTS: MARK**

### **5.12. The initial contact**

I was put in touch with Orna through a friend whose help I asked in finding a single mother for the purpose of my research. She did not know Orna herself but had heard about her from another friend. When I phoned Orna she said she would be interested in being observed if she thought that the research would help to further the understanding of single parent families.

We met a few days later. Orna is a slim, tall woman, with an expressive, longish face and short, straight hair. She met me with Moran, a close friend and a single mother as well, who shares the flat with her. They live in a ground floor, two bedroomed flat in North London. Moran's daughter, Ruth, who is eight years old, and Orna's son, Mark, who is two years and three months, share a bedroom. The children's room is large and spacious and has big windows overlooking a small garden in front of the house. The children have bunk beds, which have quite a few stickers on their legs. There are children's toys and some shelves with children's books along one wall. Usually some of Mark's toys are scattered about the room. On the top of a cupboard in the corner are different dolls that Ruth collects. That is her corner, where Mark can not reach, where she sits and plays or reads when she wants to maintain her privacy. There is a long corridor leading from the area of the entrance door, the children's room and the bedroom to the living room - which is a combined open-plan kitchen and living room. A work top separates the rather small and crowded kitchen from the living room. Along the wall opposite the kitchen corner there are some shelves with different 'handy' items and a stereo. Underneath the shelves there is a big cardboard box full of Mark's toys, and a rubbish bin. By the shelves there is a pine dining table and next to it there is a TV and a desk. Next to the work top there is a 'sitting' corner consisting of a small sofa, a coffee table and an armchair. Next to the armchair there is a mattress on the floor on which Moran sleeps at night, which at other times functions as a seat to watch TV. The carpets are somewhat run down, and the white-painted walls are in need of fresh paint. Above

the desk there is an old poster of a cat which the previous tenants had left. There are wide French windows leading to the garden, which create some feeling of space in a place that otherwise feels somewhat claustrophobic and crowded. On the whole the place gives one a feeling of coziness combined with neglect, as it is usually fairly untidy: toys in different places, full ashtrays as all the adult visitors smoke, as do Moran and Orna. The flat has the appearance of a temporary home until they find a more suitable permanent place in which to settle down.

Orna wanted to know about the purpose of the research, about the methodology; whether I had any hypothesis, which theories I had in the back of my mind as a scheme of reference. She said she was willing to take part in the research so that people would have a better understanding of the cause of single parent families, as she thought that the literature that she came across stigmatised them. She said that she was aware of Mark not having contact with his father, but they had many friends whom Orna thought he experienced as an extended family, and she hoped this would compensate for the lack of a father. I told Orna I didn't have an hypothesis, that I tried as much as possible to keep an open mind, and that the purpose of the research would be to explore the meaning of the experience of being a child of a single mother. I explained that I would come for six months once a week to observe whatever she and Mark were doing, and that I would write it up after the observation. Orna said she would be very interested to read what I wrote and we agreed that she would do so.

### 5.13. Family Background

Orna was born and grew up in Israel. She is the eldest girl in a family of three girls. Both her parents were academics. She first came to London when she was 21, "Escaping", as she said, "from the two years trauma of my military service". She studied for her first degree in an art college, and then proceeded to read for a higher degree at a distinguished college of arts. When she was 27 she returned to Israel and worked in a high technology industry, making sure that she did not take part in projects that were linked to military equipment, as this was contrary to her beliefs.

At the age of 30, Orna discovered that she was pregnant, in the third month of the pregnancy. At the time she had a steady relationship with her partner, although they were not living together. She had been told by different gynaecologists that, due to a long-standing problem, there was little likelihood of her getting pregnant. She had therefore not been using contraceptives, but nevertheless became pregnant. She decided to have the baby. Though her partner put pressure on her to marry or at least to live together, she refused to do so, insisting that he have a relationship with Mark independent of his relationship with her. Mark's father kept in contact with Orna during the pregnancy and with Mark for the first few weeks of his life, but, as Orna refused to marry, he broke the contact when Mark was a few weeks old.

Orna was active in the extreme left-wing of Israeli politics, and as a result she felt constantly harassed and persecuted by the Israeli Secret Service. That, and her difficulty in accepting the social and political status quo of Israel, drove her to emigrate. She had come to England with Mark eight months before the observations started and had found a job in her profession in a factory outside London. This entailed long journeys, leaving home at 8 am. and returning at approximately 6 pm. Moran had been a close friend of Orna's since childhood. She had divorced Ruth's father when Ruth was five years old. She too had been very active in extreme left-wing politics in Israel and also felt she had been harassed and persecuted by the Secret Service. She came to England to do a Ph.D. with the intention of emigrating. In London she ran groups for Palestinian women and others in order to make a living. Both Orna and Moran married to enable them to stay in England, but neither had any relationship with their 'husbands'.

There was a constant political atmosphere in their household, with many people, all of them activists in the extreme left-wing of Israeli politics, some of them famous political refugees, Israelis and Palestinians, coming and going from demonstrations, for discussions with coffee and cigarettes. The fact that all of these people felt constantly harassed by the Israeli Secret Service created a pervasive feeling of paranoia, which almost always one could sense in the atmosphere of their home. The constant hectic movement made it at times difficult to be an observer.

Throughout the period of the observations I felt welcomed as an observer, Orna and Moran telling me whenever I came what Mark had been doing between the observations, commenting on his behaviour, and telling me about themselves. After two or three months Orna started at times to move into an observationally 'reflective position', observing Mark's activity with me and commenting on what she thought he might be experiencing at the time. In retrospect, it seems she created with me a 'couple' who kept Mark in mind, very interested in thinking about his different activities and experiences. In almost all the observations Ruth was there as well. Mark was very attached to Ruth and she played an important role in his life.

Mark was two years and four months old when observations commenced. He looks a strong, solid toddler who moves around quickly; he has pale skin, vivid blue eyes and light brown hair. He seems to have a mixture of soft, babyish features and the masculine look of a tough little boy.

When I came to the first observation Mark was friendly, at times saying something to me or showing me something and then continuing with his activity. It seemed that, as he was used to seeing different people coming and going, he accepted my presence there as a matter of fact.

#### 5.14. A Summary of a Sample of Observations

The following is a summary of a sample of observations:

##### Observation 1, 31.12.87, pp. 155-159

Mark and Mother opened the door. Mark said hello and smiled and Mother said that he probably remembered that I was coming. Mother went to the kitchen, and Mark went to his room. He hugged the leg of his platform bed and then touched the different stickers on the side of his bed. He said "Mummy" a few times and then went to the kitchen where Mother was making coffee. He stood behind Mother's leg and hugged one of them, peeping at me from between them. He came and hugged my legs and then moved back

to Mother and again hugged her leg. He repeated this a few times. He asked for his bottle and as Mother prepared it he kept moving from her legs to mine as described. He got the bottle and went and lay on his back on the big cushion. With one hand he held the bottle and drank from it and with the other he stroked the cushion. As he drank he looked up with a dreamy expression. As I observed him I had a feeling of loneliness.

When he had finished the milk he said "Ruth" and Mother reminded him that Ruth and Moran had gone to Somerset. In answer to Mother's question he said he missed them and then moved and stood by Mother. He looked somewhat lost. Mother gave him some lego which he played with for a while. As Mother put a cigarette in her mouth and was about to light it he went and lay on her lap. Mother put the cigarette on the coffee table and Mark lay there, stroking her cheek. He then stood up, put the cigarette in his mouth, looking at the ceiling as he did so. Mother asked him whether he was looking for the smoke and he nodded. He went to the rubbish bin, pretending that he was dropping the cigarette into it. Mother took the cigarette and offered him a puzzle. Mark did the puzzle, Mother helping him gently whenever he got stuck, saying "I think this part fits here", "perhaps if you turn it around". As he finished doing the puzzle he separated the different pieces but still kept the general organisation of the picture on the floor. He took two pieces and held one in each hand, putting them together and then separating them. He did the same on the floor and then did the puzzle again.

He turned the TV on and watched it. When the film ended he came up behind Mother and hugged her. Then he went on watching a new film. When the film ended Mark asked for more milk. Mother gave him the bottle and he sat on her lap sucking then biting the bottom of the bottle, looking at the milk inside it. Some milk dropped onto Mother who commented on it, telling him to hold it properly. Mark then sucked for a few seconds and again turned the bottle over as described above.

As Mark and Mother followed me to the door Mark stretched out his hand to touch my cheek, stroking my beard with his fingers.

As I stood outside by the entrance door and waited I heard Mark say "Ruth". As he opened the door Mother said, "It's Yaron, not Ruth". He gave me a half smile and led the way into the living room where Moran was sitting reading. Mother prepared the bottle for Mark and coffee for the adults. As Mark got the bottle he went and lay behind the big cushion on the mattress, partially covering himself with the cushion. He completely disappeared except for his left hand which he put above his head, touching the cushion. As he lay there I heard him having a conversation with himself and then he went on drinking. While he drank his finger stroked the cushion. When he was talking to himself he moved his hand at times from side to side as if it was an antenna. Meanwhile the adults drank coffee and smoked cigarettes, talking about politics in Israel and the persecution of the radical left wing.

Mark stood up holding the empty bottle and ran towards the front door. He went back to the cushion and pulled it behind him to the front door. He then came back and climbed up to the window sill where he found a blue plastic bottle which he started knocking on the window sill. He got down onto the floor and spoke into the bottle as if it were a microphone. He went to the telephone and knocked on it with the bottle. Holding the bottle he ran towards the front door but fell and dropped the bottle. He pulled himself together, went to the telephone (leaving the bottle on the floor), lifted the receiver and spoke for a while. Moran stood up and walked towards the entrance door and Mark said "Ruth". He climbed onto the desk and aimed his hand towards a poster of a cat and towards the adults as he made sounds of shooting.

Mark went to Moran and asked her to give him the lego. He sat on the floor playing. He took a lego house, pushed his hand inside it, opening and closing the windows and the door, saying "Mine". He took a van and drove it in and out of the lego house. He took a towing trailer and drove the van on it and back to the floor a few times. He drove the van into the house and back on the trailer a few times. Moran went to fetch Ruth and as she left Mark drove the van and the trailer until he got behind the TV. He drove them on the back of the TV and the video for a long time and seemed very



absorbed in it. Mark drove the van and the trailer on the floor until he got to the desk. He said something about a 'job'. Mother asked him whether the job was to repair the TV and he nodded. Mark then drove the van on the glass of the door and on the drawers of the desk.

As I stood up to go Mark ran to the front door, opened it, ran back to me, hugged my leg and ran back to the door.

Observation 5, 11.2.88, pp. 168-173

Moran opened the door, inviting me in. In the living room were Mother and two adults, a man and a woman who were introduced to me: Erik and Diana. They were talking and drinking coffee and smoking. Ruth and her friend, Barbara, were sitting on the mattress watching TV. Mark stood next to them, watching TV as well. He did not react at all when I said "hello" to him, and did not give me any sign of recognition.

The girls went to the dining table to eat. Mark joined them. He stood by his baby seat for a while and then asked Barbara to lift him into his chair. She tried but could not do so and then Diana rescued them. The children ate, Mark looking at the two girls all the time, concentrating more on them than on his food. The girls each had a glass of water and Mark too asked for a glass of water. Ruth went to fetch him a glass of water but he said he did not want it, he wanted Barbara's water. Ruth gave him Barbara's glass and gave Barbara the glass she had just fetched, but Barbara said she did not want the "new water", she wanted water "like the water she had before". Ruth explained to Barbara that all the water came from the same tank and managed to convince her to take the "new water". Ruth helped Mark to drink and then moved to her seat and ate. From the time I arrived the adults had been sitting and talking about politics in Israel. The girls finished eating and left the table. Mark struggled to get out of his baby chair for some time. Diana came a few times and offered to help him but Mark's answer was "On my own". When Diana offered to help him the fourth time Mark wanted Barbara to help him, which she did. Once on the floor Mark took a plastic lid, covered his eyes with it and

looked at me through it, coming towards me and then touching my knee. As he stood in front of me, Barbara went home without saying goodbye. Shortly after, Diana left and Moran said she would go in a few minutes. As Moran left Mark took a short plastic pipe which he used as if it were a telescope, looking at the ceiling through it, and then looking at my face as he came closer to me. He asked Ruth to go with him outside to the street. He went to Mother, hugged her leg, and wanted her to go outside with him, then to his room and then to the doctor's. Mother said she wanted to talk and to drink her coffee and that he should keep himself occupied. Mark took three cars and arranged them on the floor, one after the other, facing the front door. He took a yellow stick and knocked on the middle car where there was a place for a driver and then pushed the stick in and out of the driver's hole. With the stick he hit the rubbish bin. He went to the coffee table and said that Barbara, Moran and Diana had gone away. He said "bye-bye" and walked towards the front door.

Mother returned to the adult conversation, describing the body search and the interrogation she had gone through in the Israeli Embassy. There was a telephone call for Mother and Mark came back, clinging to her knee and pulling the cord. When Mother finished the conversation he wanted her to go with him to his room, clinging to her foot. Mother said she wanted to drink her coffee and gave him his bottle. Mark threw the bottle away and Mother picked him up and carried him to his room to sleep, Mark having a temper tantrum on the way. While Mother was in Mark's room Erik told me about his war traumas and his discharge from military service in Israel due to a psychiatric assessment. When Mother came back she put on a video about the riots in the occupied territories.

Observation 8, 10.3.88, pp. 178-183

Mark and Mother opened the door. When I came into the living room I found Ruth and Moran sitting on the mattress watching TV. Mark went very close to the TV and watched the programme, talking to himself. There was a telephone call for Mother. After a while Moran invited Mark to sit with them and he joined them on the mattress, sitting on

Moran's lap. After a while he started moving restlessly until Ruth moved and made some space between Moran and herself into which Mark settled. After watching TV for a while, Mark went and fetched a book. He sat next to Moran, reading it carefully, gradually becoming absorbed in the story and talking to himself. He finished reading, rolled onto the floor, lying on his front, his face close to the mattress, placing the book so that part of it was on the mattress and part of it covered some of his face. He then rolled over to the middle of the room and lying on his back he picked up a doll from the floor. He put the doll in front of his face, holding it there for a short while, and then moved it until it got between his knees, holding it there for a few minutes. He then stood up, went to the desk, opened the drawer, and put the doll inside. A few minutes later he took the doll and dropped it on the floor. Then he pulled the drawer further out and climbed into it and sat there looking at the room. He got out of the drawer and took a leather belt from the desk, feeling it with his fingers. He drew the two ends together, thus creating a circle, then making and breaking the circle a few times, feeling the leather with his fingers at the same time. He put it aside and then felt with his fingers an empty cassette box that was on the desk, pushing it backwards and forwards. He took a walkman and earphones from the desk and pressed the different buttons. He got hold of the earphones but Ruth interfered, saying "Mark, no" so he left them. He found a pencil and a piece of paper and sat on the floor drawing. He made dots-holes in the paper and concentrated for a while on feeling the holes with his finger. (At that point Mother finished her telephone conversation).

Mark went over to the shelves and took a brooch with a green stone in the centre which he touched, feeling it with his finger. He took a piece of paper and some crayons and went to Mother. At his request Mother made drawings of a cat, Aly (a male friend) and Erik. Mark scribbled on the drawing of Aly's face. He then sat on the floor and did a puzzle of a rabbit, looking at it closely for a while as he finished constructing it. He moved to the sofa and from underneath it took out a racing car and a van. He held a car in each hand, making sounds as if they were driving, moving the cars away from each

other then bringing them together again. The racing car touched the back doors of the van and then he put the van on its roof and the racing car on the van's bottom. Then he drove the cars away from each other and then put them together, one on top of the other as he made soft noises of a slight accident. He got a towing car and put the three cars parallel to each other. He then got a helicopter which he flew above the cars for a while as if it were observing and checking on them from above. Next he got a toy tennis racquet, held it between his legs and walked around as if it was a horse. He invited Mother for a ride and she joined him, standing behind him. She then sat down and watched him riding. There was a telephone call for Mother and as she was talking Mark came and hit her with the racquet, which he then left on the sofa. He went over to the shelves where he found on the floor a small white ball. He lay on the floor next to the ball and then discovered the brooch. He touched the green stone, feeling it with his finger. He stood up, holding the white ball, and put it inside a white plastic container. He shook and bounced the ball inside the container until the ball fell out. He picked up the ball, opened a cylinder box full of beads, tried to push the ball inside it but there was no space for it. He put some beads into his mouth and then spat them out saying "baby". He put the white container on his head like a hat and started marching around the room. He went to the wall and pretended that he was collapsing. He stood up, took a giraffe, put it inside the container, shaking and bouncing it until it fell out. Then he took an elephant and a small doll from the shelves and went to the window above the sofa. He knocked on the window with them and then played with them on the window sill, bringing them together and separating them. He went to the desk and intentionally knocked over two chairs there. He swung between the legs of one of the chairs until he fell and hurt himself and started crying.

Observation 9, 17.3.88, pp. 184-191

Mark opened the door. On his head was the white container he had been playing with at the previous observation. He said it was a hat, and as we entered the flat he turned to me and asked who I had come to see. I said I came to see him and Mother.

When I entered the living room Mother was talking on the telephone, Moran was sitting on the armchair, and Ruth was watching TV. Mark started running around with the container-hat on his head. After a while he put an empty soup bowl on his head instead of the container. He came and stood in front of me, looking at my face, and said the soup bowl was a hat. He ran around for a while with the new hat on. He then put the new hat aside and came and climbed on my lap and sat there.

Moran told me at that point that Mother and Mark were going to Berlin for two weeks in three days time. As she mentioned it, Mark went to the box with his toys and started searching inside. He reached the tape recorder on the shelves and started pressing its different buttons. He searched again in the box and took out a magic board. He looked closely at the board he was holding and then again pressed the different buttons of the tape recorder. He took the magic board to Mother and wanted her to draw Harry. Mother told me that Harry was a very close friend who was going with them to Berlin. Mark started taking the magic board apart, arranging the different parts on the coffee table. He said he was repairing it and kept whispering to it as he arranged the different parts on the table, looking at them very closely and thoughtfully. He rearranged the different parts and said it was an aeroplane on which they would go to Germany, observing it very carefully. He pushed his hand under the table, feeling the bottom of the table with his fingers. He discovered a hole and asked what it was. Mother seemed surprised and checked the place and then said it was a hole to add another leg to the table. Mark thought about Mother's answer for a few seconds and then said, "Where is the baby?" He picked up a doll, saying "Yellow baby" and walked to the mattress. He picked up Ruth's pencil case, closed it and put it inside her school bag. He walked, pulling the school bag behind him. Moran offered him help to put the bag on his back.

Mark agreed but as she was about to put it on he said anxiously, "No", moving away from her. He pulled the school bag to the front door, came back and said that he was going to school and repeated playing this game for some time. He then got a slice of bread, put it in the school bag and came to me asking me to close the bag. He wanted me to put the bag on his back and then wanted me to go with him, pulling me to the front door. He wanted me to go outside with him, which I refused to do. Again he played for some time, going to school and coming back.

He came back into the living room, opened the school bag and took out a spray for asthma. He looked at it closely and then moved it all over his body and his face, saying it was a deodorant. Mother said he never missed watching her putting on her deodorant in the morning. He then took out of the bag Ruth's album in which she collects pictures of animals and dolls. He looked very closely at the pictures, taking them out of the album page by page as he went along. When Moran came back from the toilet Mark jumped up and ran towards Mother. Mother asked him whether was scared and then added that it was Moran who had come in. He moved to the school bag and standing by it he turned towards the entrance door saying that someone was coming. Mother calmed him down and told him that there was no-one coming. Mark sat down and played with the spray and then with the pictures as described. Ruth, who was watching TV, suddenly discovered that Mark was playing with her album and went and took away the album and pictures from him. Mark followed her, trying to pull the album. When he didn't manage to do so he started crying. Mother comforted him and when he had calmed down he went to the school bag and standing by it he said "Mine".

Observation 17, 12.5.88, pp. 199-205

Mother opened the door. In the living room Mark and Ruth were sitting at the coffee table eating and watching TV. Moran was lying on the mattress next to them watching TV. I said "hello" but got no response, they were all absorbed in the TV. After a few

minutes Mark stretched out his arm and put his hand on my arm. With two fingers he felt the hair on my arm, looking at it very closely, and then went on eating and watching TV. After some time Mark stood up, trying to pull his chair out of its place. He did not manage this and walked to the other side of the table, on his way walking across the mattress, stepping on Moran who was lying there. He took Ruth's fork (who did not notice as she was watching TV) and moved back to his chair, again stepping on Moran. Ruth discovered that he had taken her fork and she took his spoon without saying a word. Mark moved behind Moran and put his arms around her neck. Moran asked him to let go of her neck and as he did not she shook him off forward and then hugged him.

Mark went to the desk and poured juice onto a cassette box. He took a straw, held it as if it was a pistol, and aimed it at Moran and Ruth. He dropped the cassette box on the floor and still aiming the straw made sounds of shooting, but they did not react and went on watching TV. He moved to the window and standing there he aimed the straw at all the people in the room, making sounds of shooting. When I asked him whether it was a gun he said it was not a gun but a straw. He threw the straw and the can of juice out of the window. Mother got annoyed and told him to bring it back. Mark went to the garden and walked around on the grass, where he found a pair of scissors. He picked them up and started cutting off a bush, flowers, and branches. Moran, who was watching him, told him not to cut branches. At that point there was a discussion between Mother and Moran as to whether cutting the bush was positive or negative, Mother saying he could cut the flowers only as it encouraged growth. Mark, who was listening to the discussion, asked "it's good?" He went to the coffee table and dipped the scissors in his food, using them as a fork. Meanwhile Mother put some food on the table for herself and Moran. Mark took a blanket from the mattress and spread it on the grass outside. He came to the table, took away the food that Moran and Mother were eating and carried it to the blanket, saying he was having a picnic.

Moran joined Mark and they sat and ate. Once in a while a plane flew over, Mark pointed at the sky looking at it and then went on eating silently. Mark went to the other side of the garden where I could not see him, and I told Mother I would go outside as I wanted to see what he was doing. Mother went outside as well and lay on the blanket. Mark was cutting off the branches and flowers of the bush. After a while he came and walked on Mother, who turned it into a game of hugging and kissing. They went on eating. Again Mark pointed to the sky, saying something, as a plane passed over.

Mark started poking the cheese and Mother stopped him. He took the margarine and a knife and spread it on the ground by some ants he had discovered, saying he was feeding the spiders. Mother took the margarine away from him. Mark came and tried to snatch Mother's burning cigarette. He went to the wall of the house, put his forehead on it, and made climbing movements with his hands and legs, all the while talking to himself. He discovered a black brick in the wall, the rest of the bricks were grey. He pressed the black brick as he talked to himself. He went to the entrance door to the living room and made the same climbing movements. He went and stepped on the gutter where it was disconnected but Mother stopped him, telling him not to break it.

In the distance there was the sounds of bells ringing. Mark stood listening, looking above the fence to the direction from which the sound came. He said "bell", walked to the fence, peeped through it saying he did not see anything as if he expected to see the bells. The bell stopped ringing and Mark mentioned it and then added that he wanted it to continue ringing. Moran said "the bell stopped ringing for today". He moved away from the fence, still looking at it as if he expected the bells to ring after all. He stepped on Mother who turned it into a game. He walked towards the other end of the garden. He found a stick with which he started hitting the bushes very forcefully. With the stick he moved towards the door where he found a coin. He put it into his mouth and refused to take it out until Mother forced him to. Still holding the stick he moved towards the bush, falling a few times for no apparent reason until he got there. He walked to the door again falling down a few times on his way. Mother said it was time for a bath and they went in, Mark still holding the stick. When I went to the bathroom to



say goodbye to Mark, he was sitting in the water holding the stick with two hands, standing it on the bottom of the bath and looking at it closely as if it was a steering stick of an aeroplane that he was flying.

Observation 19, 26.5.88, pp. 207-214

Harry opened the door and we introduced ourselves. We went to the living room and he sat on the sofa watching TV. Moran and Ruth were sitting watching TV. Mother was lying on the mattress and Mark lay there as well, his head on Mother's chest, with one hand holding a bottle that he was drinking and the other hand gently stroking Mother's chin. While he drank he looked up at the ceiling, once in a while looking at the people around and then turning his head back towards the ceiling. When Mark finished his milk he put the empty bottle aside, looked at the other people, and then both Mother and Mark changed their position, lying front to front on their side, hugging and stroking each other. As they lay there, he looked for a few seconds at the people in the room. There was a telephone call for Mother, who left Mark and went to the telephone. Mark lay for a while on his own in the same position. Then he went to the telephone and tried to disconnect the call a few times but Moran stopped him. Mark hugged Mother's leg, clinging to it, and kicked Moran as he was doing it. When Mother finished talking on the telephone and sat on the mattress drinking tea, Mark came up behind her a few times, hugging her neck, and she shook him off. There was another telephone call for Mother and Mark ran into the garden, bringing back a short thin branch. Again he ran into the garden and Mother, having finished on the telephone, sat on the mattress. He came back with a colourful sheet of wrapping paper and standing in front of Mother he put the paper on his face, looking at her as if he could see through it. He dropped the paper and took a hammer toy to Ruth, putting it to her lips, and she sucked it for a short time. Still holding the hammer he got a ladle and put the hammer in and out of the ladle a few times. He put the hammer and the ladle aside and picked up a straw from the floor. Holding the

straw he walked around and then put it on the desk. There was a loud noise of a plane and he went outside, looking up for a while.

Mark started jumping from the desk to the mattress. After some time Ruth went to him, asking whether she could join him. He gave her his permission and for some time they jumped, one after the other. Ruth then wanted them to jump together at the same time, holding hands, but Mark refused. Ruth went to the mattress and pretended she was crying. Mark came to her and touching her shoulder agreed to her request, and they jumped together for a while.

Ruth took a plastic bag inside which was a small rubber ball and she bounced the bag on the floor as she stood on the desk. Mark took the straw, put it in his mouth and stood there observing Ruth. Whenever she dropped the bag Mark helped her, taking the bag to the desk. He went on observing her, the straw in his mouth as Ruth bounced the ball on the floor and on the ceiling. Mark wanted Ruth to play outside in the garden but she refused. He went out, lay on the grass with his back to the room, and put his face very close to the grass as he held the straw and touched the grass with it as if it were a pencil. After a while he went to Ruth, again asking her to come out, but she refused and he went back to lie on the grass as described. Again he went to Ruth and wanted her to throw the ball to him. Ruth played a trick on him, pretending to throw the ball which Mark started searching for outside until he discovered that Ruth was holding it. She kept doing it a few times.

Observation 25, 27.7.88, pp. 224-228

A woman friend of Mother's opened the door and as she opened the door a 'strange' dog welcomed me. We went upstairs to the kitchen where Mother, Harry and a man I had not seen before were sitting at the table drinking coffee and smoking. Harry went to the living room to join Mark. In the living room Mark was sitting at a small single table, eating and watching the TV. Harry sat on an armchair behind Mark and I sat on the couch. After some time the dog came and licked some food from the table. Mark lifted his hand without moving and told the dog to go away. Harry pushed the dog away.

The dog kept approaching the table and each time Mark told him to go away and Harry pushed him or stamped on the floor and the dog withdrew. At some point Mark took the slice of bread he had and made a hole in its centre, pushing four fingers into it. He threw the slice of bread on the floor and went on eating, keeping an eye on the dog. After a while he put his bowl of soup on the floor. He stood up and put the chair on his head like a helmet. Then he put the chair on the table and lay on the floor next to the table. He stood up and turned the chair, putting it in different positions on the table. Finally he stood the chair on the table and went to sit on Harry's lap. The dog licked some food on the table and Mark said it would eat the chair. Mark took the chair to the kitchen and put it inside a big cardboard box full of rubbish. He came back to the living room and sat on Harry's lap, watching TV. The dog kept approaching Mark and both Mark and Harry stamped and frightened it away. At some point as the dog jumped on Mark, he escaped to the couch and sat on my lap, watching TV. I sat passively and didn't encourage him to stay on my lap. After a while he took the table and put it on the couch, saying "my house". He put his head under the table, lying on his side watching TV. As he watched he kept moving his head in and out of the 'house'. The film on the TV was an animation about two soldiers disarming themselves. At some point as he was watching he started jumping from the couch, landing heavily on the floor and saying "loud". After a while he stood on the back, pointing at the soldiers and referring to them as "monster". He said he was afraid of the monster, he jumped to the floor and took a wooden stick from the corner of the room. He held the stick as if it was a sword, standing in a threatening gesture close to the TV saying that he was going to fight the monster and watching TV in that position. When the film ended he turned around and tried to hit Harry with the stick, saying that Harry was the monster. Mark left the room and went to the kitchen, Harry joining him. In the kitchen Mark hit Harry with the stick. He then moved to the cardboard box and took out the chair he had placed there earlier, putting it on the floor. Looking at the woman visitor he told her that the dog had eaten his chair.

Erik opened the door and invited me to see his part of the house. I went upstairs and found Mark and Mother in the bathroom, Mark having a bath. Mother said she was going to buy cigarettes and would be back in a couple of minutes. Mark sat in the water and started playing with the bottle of shampoo, putting it to his mouth as if he was drinking, smiling at me each time he put it to his mouth and keeping eye contact with me all the time. At some point he said to me, "drinking beer" and went on playing as described. He put a piece of sponge in his mouth and chewed it, looking at me and smiling (I had a mint in my mouth). Mother came back and pulled the plug and then went to make coffee. As there was no water left in the bath Mark took the plug and held it, observing its hollow part where there was some water left. He then drank the water from the plug and put it on his sole, holding it there for a few seconds. He took it off his sole and observed the sole for a while. He put the plug on his toe for a few seconds, again looking at it. He took it off and put it on his penis in the same way and looked at it for a few seconds saying "no Dumbo, gone". He took the plug off his penis and put it on his sole at different points. At each point he held it for a few seconds, observing it and then moving it to the next point. At some point he said "hugging" and then went on moving the plug.

Mother came and took him to his room to dress him. Mother brought a bowl of soup and put it on the single table in the living room for Mark. Mark took a car and game consisting of a few pieces of road and a few pipes supporting them into the living room. He sat at the table and built a tower from the three pieces of pipe. He gave the tower to Mother who was sitting on the armchair behind him. He turned to the table and started playing. He drove the car on the table around the bowl and between the pieces of the road, back to the bowl and then inside a yellow pipe like a tunnel. The car started bumping into the yellow piece and then into the parts of the road. He did it slowly and tenderly and it looked like a representation of a bumping rather than an accident. Then he dipped the car in the soup and drove it on the spoon. Leaving the car in the spoon he put it in the soup and then took the car out. He then turned around, trying to feed

Mother with the spoon but poured the soup on the carpet. Again he tried to feed Mother and poured the soup. Mother took all the toys from the table. After a while as he ate, Mark wanted Mother to turn the TV on. There was a documentary programme about the heart and the man who presented the programme sat with a background of a heart. It looked as if he was sitting inside the heart. Mark watched the programme closely as he ate. When I asked him what was happening he said that the man was sitting inside the shark, and then went on eating and watching.

### 5.15. Emerging Patterns

As observations proceeded some patterns emerged in the development of the observations and in the kinds of activities and objects that engaged Mark's attention.

The following is a summary of the main themes as they emerged over time:

#### 5.151 Hugging Mother's leg

Hugging Mother's leg was an item of Mark's behaviour that appeared throughout the period of observations. It seemed to happen in situations when he was forming new relationships. Thus for example Observation 1, p. 155: 'He hugged the leg of his platform bed when I came into his room. Later on he hugged Mother's leg, peeping at me, and then moved to hug my leg and back to hug Mother's legs'.

The same behaviour appeared in situations where he lost people when they went away, or when he lost their attention. Thus for example Observation 2, p. 163: 'He hugged my leg as I was about to leave'; Observation 5, p. 173: 'He went and hugged Mother's leg while she was talking on the telephone and tried to disconnect the call'.

#### 5.152 The use of the bottle and the creation of a private space

Throughout the period of observations, whenever Mark got his bottle of milk he would take it and lie down to drink it, away from other people and the events that took place in the room. In doing it Mark seemed to create a private space where he stayed until he

finished his milk. While in that state he was always intensely preoccupied, stroking something with his hand or looking at the ceiling as he was drinking. Thus for example Observation 2, p. 160: 'He lay behind the cushion, partially covered by it, drinking the milk and stroking the cushion. I could hear him having a conversation with himself and then he went on drinking. Meanwhile the adults were drinking coffee, smoking and talking about politics'.

#### 5.153 The intensive play of separating and bringing objects together

A pattern of play in which Mark was intensely preoccupied in separating objects and then bringing them together again appeared throughout the period of observations. Thus for example Observation 1, p. 158: 'He constructed a puzzle and then separated the parts very gently, keeping a distance between the different parts but still keeping the general organisation of the picture. Then he took a piece in each hand, bringing them together and then separating them'. A similar activity appeared in Observation 2, p. 162 with cars; Observation 8, p. 181 with a doll and an elephant; Observation 19, p. 209 with a hammer and a ladle.

#### 5.154 .The intense preoccupation with objects when Mother was not available

Throughout the period of observation when Mother was not available for Mark he would become absorbed in playing with objects, hardly ever making an alternative link with another adult around. Thus for example Observation 5, p. 171: 'Mark wanted Mother to go outside with him. Though Erik invited him to sit on his lap, he stayed with him for a few seconds and then insisted that Mother should go with him. When Mother refused he turned to his cars and became absorbed in his play'. Observation 8, p. 182: 'Mother stopped watching Mark playing as she received a telephone call. Mark went and hit Mother and then became intensely preoccupied in his activity with the brooch, the ball, the beads and the white container'.

### 5.155 .Mark - Ruth — the Group

Throughout the period of observations it seemed that the relationship with Ruth was very important for Mark. In observations when Ruth was not at home Mark used to mention her, clearly missing her as he actually said in Observation 1, p. 156: 'He seemed to be preoccupied with her absence, constantly expecting her arrival'. Thus for example Observation 2, p. 160: 'I heard him saying Ruth as he came to open the door and Mother said it was Yaron, not Ruth'. Later on p. 161: "When Moran walked towards the entrance door Mark said "Ruth". It appeared as if Mark felt that without Ruth his world was not complete - together they formed a small group or a couple.

Often when I came there were adult visitors, most of them people who shared the same political views which they usually discussed. On those occasions the adult's group seemed to be quite distinct from the children's group. Thus for example Observation 5, p. 169: 'There was a group of four adults sitting at the coffee table, talking about politics, and a group of three children eating, Ruth bringing them some water to drink and Barbara trying to help Mark to climb and sit in his baby chair, and later on helping him to get out of his chair after he had refused to be helped by an adult'.

Even in observations, when there were no visitors it seemed at times that one was witnessing a group phenomenon. On those occasions it took Mark quite a while until he moved himself out of the group and started playing on his own. Thus for example Observation 8, p. 178: 'Mark, Ruth and Moran were sitting close to each other, watching TV....After a while Mark started moving restlessly and Moran said he wanted to push Ruth....Later on Mark fetched a book, put it next to Moran and sat there for a while, and then rolled to the floor and started playing on his own'.

## 5.2 DISCUSSION : MARK

### 5.21 Variable Grid

<b>Subject: Mother</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Name of Child: Mark  Name of Mother: Orna  Single Mother: Yes	1: Loneliness	No
	2: Material deprivation	No – average standard of living
	3: Low self-esteem	No
	4: Lack of emotional support	No
	5: Child replacing partner	No
	6: Signs of depression	No
	7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history	Not observed
	8: Supportive network of friends	Yes (strong)
	9: Educational level	High
	10: Nationality / ethnicity	Israel



## Variable Grid

Subject: Child	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Mark</p> <p>Name of Mother: Orna</p> <p>Single Mother: Yes</p>	<p>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</p> <p>2: High level of anxiety</p> <p>3: Evidence of failure to separate</p> <p>4: Problems of gender identity</p> <p>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>No</p> <p>Not measurable failure. At the beginning an amorphic state of separateness, as part of a group. Towards the end of observations distinct separation.</p> <p>Confused gender identity at the beginning. Clear gender identity at the end.</p> <p>Significantly helpful.</p>

### 5.22. More than good enough mother-child relationships.

From my initial visit to Orna and Mark throughout the period of observations, I clearly observed a mother-child relationship that is more than 'good enough'. Clearly Mother is in touch with Mark's needs and anxieties, usually responding to him sensitively. When playing with him or helping him in construction games or puzzles, she has never intruded on him, and always gives him the space to find out who he is and what is his way of doing things. Mark always has plenty of space to explore all the aspects of the objects and situations with which he is preoccupied. Though there is constant movement of visitors in their household, Mother manages to keep a well-bounded space in her mind for Mark and he seems to benefit from it. Throughout the period of observations, it seemed that Mark is a child who knows his object from all its sides: sight, hearing and touching. His ability to keep and create a space in his mind for thinking about his experiences is impressive.

### 5.23. Mark's possession of Mother and the link with the observer.

At the beginning of the observations, Mark was friendly, at times relating to me, saying or showing me something and then continuing with his activity. It seems that as he was used to seeing different people coming and going he accepted my presence there as a matter of fact, not distinguishing my role as an observer from other visitors. That seems to change in the third visit, (31.12.85, pp. 155-159): "...he went to his room, hugged the leg of his platform bed .... he went to Mother in the kitchen and hugged her leg .... he moved to me and hugged my leg. He repeated hugging Mother's leg and my leg". It seems that going to his room was a way of offering me a relationship. Clearly it had not happened in the former observations nor the later observations which followed. The hugs seemed to have a quality of possessiveness as if he was saying, "this is my bed, this is my mummy, and this is my Yaron". It seems that hugging my leg was an expression of acceptance as well as of control. Perhaps by doing so, in his mind he was the one who was building the relationship between me and Mother, possibly in order to create an Oedipal atmosphere.

This pattern of Mark's behaviour appeared throughout the first three months of observations. (See, e.g. Observation 2, p. 160, Observation 5, p. 168).

#### 5.24. The creation of a private space.

From the observations it appears that Mark has two modes of operating. A mode for a social situation, for example when he moved between my leg and Mother's leg, and a private reflective mode. In Observation 1, p. 155: "After hugging Mother's leg he asked for his bottle, took it and went to lie on the cushion .... with one hand he was stroking-touching the cushion .... looking up .... his expression was dreamy - thoughtful .... Mother made coffee". In the reflective mode, Mark seems to have the ability to find space in his mind for his internal world, where he can process his experiences. He seems to know when it is that Mother would give him time and attention and when she would not. When realising she would not give him the time he seems to create a private situation for himself. Indeed, Mother took time for herself, having a cup of coffee and a cigarette, talking to me.

It seems that the creation of the private space is linked to Mark's experience of loss. Indeed, "when he finished drinking the milk he mentioned Moran and then Ruth, who went away for the weekend. He said he was missing them and my impression was that he felt bereaved without them" (Observation 1, p. 155).

This aspect in the space he creates is perhaps best demonstrated in Observation 2, 10.1.88, pp. 160-163: "As I waited by the door I heard Mark saying 'Ruth' .... he gave me half a smile, as if he was disappointed .... there was a group of adults in the living room but Ruth was not there as she had gone to a friend .... He got his bottle and went and lay behind the big cushion .... covering himself with it .... I could hear him talking to himself .... while he drank his finger stroked the cushion .... Meanwhile the adults were talking about politics .... He finished the milk, stood up .... and pulled the cushion toward the entrance door .... He fell .... Moran went towards the front door and Mark said, 'Ruth?'".

Lying behind the cushion, Mark seemed to be creating a private space, probably an essential and functional private world that was not invaded by the events around him -

the politics and the cigarette smoke. One wonders about the nature of this world. On the one hand, it seemed that Mark may be pushed into creating it, since there is so much activity at home. Perhaps this is his only way of creating an internal world where he has control of, and communication with his internal objects. On the other hand, there seems to be an element of omnipotence in the control he has on his objects and in the perfect communication he has with them. The space he creates and the objects in it appear to be totally under his control: he creates it whenever he wants or needs it. This aspect was highlighted in the sequence when he was lying behind the cushion, drinking milk. It appeared as if the perfect, most satisfying situation, ended when he finished the milk. Pulling the cushion behind him seems to indicate that he was trying to continue that state of well-being. However, he had an 'accident' and he fell, and then he seemed to be in touch with his internal and external reality where he seemed to experience an absence, perhaps the absence of Ruth whom he had mentioned, or the milk that he had finished, or both.

## 5.25. The Groups

### 5.251 . Ruth - Mark

Throughout the period of observation, but especially during the first three months, it seemed that the relationship with Ruth was very important for Mark. As already pointed out, in observations when Ruth was not at home Mark would mention her constantly, clearly missing her as he actually said in Observation 1, p. 155, preoccupied with her absence, constantly expecting her arrival. It seemed as if Mark felt that without Ruth his world was not complete. This aspect of their relationship is perhaps best demonstrated in Observation 2, pp. 160-163: "I heard Mark say, 'Ruth' .... he gave me half a smile, as if he was disappointed it was me and not Ruth .... He finished his milk ... Moran went to the front door and Mark said, 'Ruth' .... He asked Moran to give him the Lego and he started playing: he pushed his hand into the Lego house, opening and closing the window and the door, saying 'mine' a few times .... He took a towing trailer and drove the van on it and

back to the floor a few times. As Moran went to fetch Ruth he drove the van and the trailer on the back of the TV for a long time. He seemed to be very absorbed in his play".

It seems that the Lego house he got from Moran helped Mark to deal with his anxiety, probably related to the experience of absence he had had before. Playing with the house Mark seemed to be saying: "I can assert my influence and power and control". It appears as if the van and the trailer were linked to the same issue as well. His phantasy seems to be that "if the trailer and the van are hitched together then a lot can happen" - "if Mother and Father are together it is possible to control the world", (the communication). On another level the van and the trailer seem to represent Ruth and Mark - "between us we rule the universe", or "you hitch your wagon to a star". In the sequence with the cars as a whole it seemed as if the cars could get everywhere.

Taking the observation as a whole it appears as if Mark felt that without Ruth his world was not complete, he was only a half of something. He seems to be fixed on the essential presence of Ruth as something that made him feel whole. Indeed, within the context of the observations Mark's references to Ruth appeared in relation to an experience of other loss as well, usually the unavailability of Mother.

The essence of coupling seems to be: "either you are hitched to something and then gain power, control and influence or you are in limbo and have only half an existence". (See also Appendix C, pp. 240-242).

#### 5.252 . The adults' group - The children's group

Often in the observations there were adult visitors, most of them people who shared the same political views which they usually discussed. On these occasions the adults' group seemed to be quite distinct from the children's group. This situation is perhaps best demonstrated in Observation 5, 11.2.88, pp. 168-173: "... in the living room were Orna, Moran, Diana and Erik drinking coffee, smoking and talking round the coffee table. Mark, Ruth and another girl, Barbara, were watching TV sitting on the mattress .... Mark did not give me any sign of recognition .... The children sat at the table to eat .... Mark wanted Barbara to lift him on to his chair .... Mark concentrated on looking at the girls

rather than on his food .... Mark said he did not want the glass of water Ruth had brought him, he wanted Barbara's water .... Ruth helped him to drink and then moved to her seat and ate .... The girls left the table .... Mark struggled to get out of his baby chair .... he refused the help Diana offered him .... he wanted Barbara to help him .... (Barbara was about to go home) .... Mark covered his eyes with a plastic lid and looked at me through it, coming towards me and then touching my knee .... He looked at my face through the plastic pipe he had picked up as he came closer to me .... Mark wanted Mother to go with him outside .... to his room .... to the doctor's .... Mother said she wanted to talk .... he clung to Mother .... Mother carried him to his room, Mark having a temper tantrum".

It looks as if Mark was kept on the periphery by the adults. He was mainly attended by the two girls and Diana, whose help he refused. Mark took no notice of me, probably because he was a part of the children's group. It seems that the identification with the group lessened the possibility of individual relationship. The individual mentality was caught up in the group mentality. When Mark was sitting at the table eating he seemed to be in a state of projective identification (Klein, 1946) with the figures of the two other children, and that seems to be at the expense of his own identity. He wanted to be "exactly" like the other two - "to get the same water". The phantasy seems to be that in order to stay as a group they must all be identical.

One wonders about the nature of the children's group. Is it a "group" or is it a "gang". The factor that constitutes the difference between the two categories is: to what extent does the group facilitate the development of its individual members and is in relation to another group, and to what extent does it suppress the development of its members and is in opposition to another group. In the former case, it might be defined as a group and in the latter case, as a gang (Meltzer, 1967). The children's group seems to be an independent group. Perhaps the children had to organise themselves in order to hold the phantasy that they could function without the adults. It seems that Ruth was functioning as a mother figure to the others, especially to Mark. She seems to function as an adult rather than as a pseudo-adult, mediating and keeping the unity of the group. In

their group, Ruth and Mark had a base of support, in a situation where the adults seemed to be seduced away by the excitement of their own group.

However, it appears that the formation of a loose group structure has another aspect. Even when there were no visitors, one almost always observed two mothers and two children. This is a somewhat amorphous state as the two mothers are not a couple in the sense of a "mother" and a "father" couple (or father representation); neither did they see themselves as such. Still, it's not exactly a group even though it has some of the quality of a group. As I pointed out, (Observations 1 and 2), Mark tended to turn to Ruth at times of separation from Mother. Mother turned to the group, be it the mothers' group or a larger adults' group. By its nature the group situation eliminated some of the individual differences. The separation is not distinct and one can avoid the full experience of loss by being a part of a group.

As Barbara left, the integrative function of the children's group went away with her. At the point when Mark approached me, looking at me through the lid and then touching me, this was his way of being in touch with me. It seems that Mark needed an object that would help him to organize his experience. He found it in the shape of the lid and later on the pipe. Looking through the pipe has the quality of a transition (Winnicott) and control: who was there and who was absent, who was available, what was he going to do as the social situation changed. The pipe, like the lid, seems to be linked to a fantasy about regulating the distance between himself and the adults.

Throughout the rest of the observation Mark tried to create an intimate situation with Mother but she was preoccupied talking with the adults, mainly about politics. Indeed, throughout the period of observations, politics seems not only to separate people from their land (and all the people visiting as well as Orna and Moran saw themselves as political refugees), but to separate mothers from the children as well, as if it was a phallic object.

## 5.26. The Separation from the Group

### 5.261 . A vantage point and a combined object

As observations proceeded it became evident that in his play, rather than reacting to an external situation, Mark was trying to elaborate his own thoughts, processing his internal experience. This became a fundamental feature of what appeared to be his effort to work out his position in relation to the "others" - i.e. Mother and the "group".

This is best demonstrated by Observation 8, 10.3.88, pp. 178-183: "Moran and Ruth were sitting on the mattress watching TV .... Moran invited Mark to join them .... Mark became restless, moving .... Mark settled in between Ruth and Moran .... Mark was reading the book, sitting on the other side of Moran .... he seemed absorbed in the story .... talking to himself .... Mark rolled onto the floor with the book .... staying there at times he made eye contact with me .... he hid his face behind the book .... he rolled to the centre of the room. Lying on his back on the floor, he repeatedly moved the doll from above his head and put it between his knees .... he moved to the desk, opened the middle drawer and put the doll inside it .... he dropped the doll and sat inside the drawer facing the room .... he took a leather belt, drew the two ends together, thus creating a circle. He moved the ends away - making and breaking the circle a few times, all the time feeling the belt with his finger .... he took a brooch with green stone in its centre .... feeling the stone with his finger for a while .... Mother drew a cat for him and Mark commented about its legs. He wanted Mother to draw Aly and when she had done so he wanted her to draw Erik. He then sat on the floor next to mother and did a puzzle .... he moved the racing car and the van away from each other and then brought them together again. The racing car touched the back door of the van .... the racing car was on the bottom of the van, which was on the floor on its roof .... the cars were one on top of the other as he made soft noises of a slight accident .... he put the two cars and a towing car in parallel to each other .... the helicopter was flying above the three cars as if checking and observing .... He invited Mother for a ride on his tennis racquet horse .... Mother answered the telephone .... he put the white ball inside a plastic container .... and bounced it until it fell out .... he



tried to push the ball into a cylinder box full of beads but there was no space for it. He put some beads into his mouth and then spat them out, saying 'baby' .... He started marching around the room with the white plastic container on his head .... He pretended he was collapsing .... he bounced the giraffe inside the container until it fell out .... he knocked over two chairs .... he swung between the legs of the chair until he fell .... and started crying".

Mark joined Ruth and Moran only after he had been invited to do so. "Moving" seemed to be a physical expression of "psychic restlessness" - an internal experience he was trying to elaborate. The book he was busy with seems to be the beginning of this elaboration. Once he moved with the book to the floor, away from the group on the mattress, and then in the sequence with the doll until he placed himself in the drawer, it seems that Mark was trying to work out something about the link between himself and the group or the others. The drawer inside which he was sitting seems to be a vantage point from which he was trying to evaluate where to locate himself so as to get the maximum advantage in relation to his environment - whether to be at a certain moment with Moran or Ruth or Mother. Identifying with the doll he was playing with, he seems to be working out something about the doll's place, his place. It appeared to be an exploratory manoeuvre, how to find a place where he could be an individual and develop his own priorities. When he found for himself a place inside the drawer he then took the leather belt, making and breaking a circle.

In terms of unconscious phantasy, it seems that when he was trying to find a vantage point for himself the belt became a combined object (Klein, 1932), the two ends brought together to create a whole. The brooch and the stone, and the cat whose legs he had referred to, reflect a thought about the relationships between the objects constituting a whole, or the combined object. The belt, the brooch, the drawings of the cat, of Erik and of Aly, all seem to represent different relationships on different levels. These relationships he seems to be processing while doing the puzzle - making a picture of his reality, trying to make sense of all of that. For that to be possible one really needs a vantage point. It seems that the puzzle he constructed gave him a position of safety.

From this position he built a complicated set of possible relationships that he tried to explore in his play with the cars. It appears as if the helicopter that was observing, thinking and containing from above, enabled Mark to elaborate and explore his phantasies about the different relationships. These phantasies seem to relate to Oedipal relationships represented in the play by the two cars and the three cars. One wonders whether the helicopter represented the observer. It seems plausible to conclude that the preconditions for being able to think about the different relationships were: 1) having a vantage point, and 2) the presence of the observer.

It seems that having a ride with Mother on the racquet was an Oedipal fantasy he developed at that point. The racquet seems to function as a vehicle on which a couple got together. But a telephone call broke that situation and Mother was busy talking on the telephone. Whoever it was took Mother away. At that point Mark seems to start searching for the kind of fitting where something contained another thing - the ball in the container, the ball in the cylinder and the beads in his mouth. That was probably the link to the baby he mentioned. He was the baby searching for a nipple to enter his mouth. It seems that when Mother talked on the telephone he experienced it as losing his container - the attention of Mother, "a baby with an open mouth without a nipple inside it" (Bick, 1968). At that point he had started shifting to a manic repetition of the things he had done before. Putting the white container on his head and marching was a shift from thinking about his experience to action. All the sequence that followed appears to be a "negative grid" (Bion, 1963) - he was going through the same feelings he had had before, but evading them rather than processing them. It looks as if playing with the giraffe inside the container is similar to the play with the ball. Playing with the doll and the elephant is similar to his play with the cars. It was not an elaboration of thought any longer, but a dismantling of thoughts, action took the place of thinking about his emotional experience until he fell and cried. [A search for similar containing combined objects seems to be evident in Observation 9, 17.3.88, in his playing with Ruth's school bag].

One wonders about the shift from thinking to action. Clearly it followed Mother's telephone conversation. Did the thinking process collapse because he was no longer in Mother's mind? Or did it collapse because someone has taken Mother away in the middle of the riding phantasy? Clearly, he was able to contain Oedipal rivalry when he had been playing with the cars earlier on. If the former possibility is more relevant, then it might be plausible to assume that what is necessary to maintain the thinking process is a mother and an observer who think about him, and jointly create a space containing the child. Having this space provides the child with a vantage point from which he can explore the relationships concerning the people involved in the creation of this space, himself included. If this hypothesis has anything to it, then we have an indication as to why the group is not an alternative for a couple. In the group the child is kept in the mind of the parent to a lesser extent. He gets a sense of belonging by being a member but he loses this specific space created by the parents. [The theme of searching for the best location is evident in Observation 5 and to a lesser extent throughout the observations at moments of separation and change in the social situation].

#### 5.252 . The separation from the group as a violent process

As observation proceeded to the fourth month, the observer seems to gain importance by his presence in helping Mark to distinguish himself from the group and to be in a state of mind of exploration of the different parts of himself. This is well demonstrated by Observation 9, (17.3.88, pp. 184-191): "Mark opened the door. On his head was the white plastic container .... he said it was a hat .... he asked who I had come to see. I said I came to see him and Mother. In the living room Mother was talking on the telephone, Moran was sitting in the armchair, and Ruth was watching TV. Mark started running around with the container-hat on his head. After a while he put an empty soup bowl on his head instead of the container .... he came to me and said it was a hat .... he put the new hat aside and climbed on my knee and sat there".

It seems as if changing his "hats" after I had entered the room was linked to my arrival. "Changing the hats", Mark seems to be puzzling out what it was that enabled

change to take place. He "changed hats" in a particular atmosphere: until I entered everyone was preoccupied with something: Mother on the telephone, Ruth watching TV. I came to see him, as he asked, and Mark probably experienced it as giving him a defined place in the group. It appeared as if my arrival enabled him to be in a state of mind in which he could explore different parts of himself. This state of mind was probably represented by the second hat-bowl that he put on. Once he had the experience that it was possible to change, he realised that my presence there was important in enabling this change and he then came to sit on my knee. [The theme of the hats was evident in Observation 8 as well].

Three weeks later when I came for the observation Mother told me that she felt that Mark had become very aware of his gender identity. Whereas before he was often talking about himself in a feminine form in Hebrew, now he clearly referred to himself as a male. To make the point she told me that the day before when Moran asked him, 'How old are you?' Mark replied, 'I am a boy'.

The struggle to be different not only as an individual in relation to the group but different in terms of gender identity is well demonstrated by Observation 17, (12.5.88, pp. 199-206): "... Mark and Ruth were sitting at the coffee table eating ravioli. The TV was on, Moran was lying on the mattress .... all of them were watching TV .... Mark stretched out his hand and put it on my arm .... touching-stroking my arm .... feeling the hair on my arm and looking at it very closely .... He tried to move his chair out of its place but could not do so. He walked to the other side of the table, on his way stepping on Moran .... He took Ruth's fork and went back to his chair, again stepping on Moran .... He hung himself round Moran's neck from behind .... she shook him off .... and she hugged him .... He took a can of juice and a straw .... he bent the straw and used it as if it was a pistol .... aiming it towards Moran and Ruth, making 'puff puff' sounds .... I asked whether it was a gun and he said it was a straw, not a gun .... He threw the straw and the can out of the window .... and Mother told him to go and bring them back. Mark went outside .... With the scissors he started cutting off the flowers and the branches from the bush. Moran told him to stop it .... there was a discussion between the adults .... Mother thought it encouraged the

development of the bush as long as he only cut the branches .... Mark, who was listening, asked 'It's good?' .... He used the scissors as a fork to eat ravioli .... As Moran and Mother were eating .... he came, took all the food and put it on the blanket he had spread in the garden. He said he was having a picnic .... Moran joined him .... Whenever a plane flew over he pointed at it, followed it until it disappeared .... He walked to a part of the garden where I could not observe him. I went out .... Mother joined Moran on the blanket .... He came back .... walked on Mother .... lay on her .... they hugged and kissed .... He started poking at the cheese .... he spread margarine on the ground .... he tried to snatch Mother's lighted cigarette .... He put his forehead on the wall, making movements with his arms and legs and as if he was climbing up the wall, talking to himself. He discovered a black brick in the wall, the rest of the bricks being grey. He pressed the black brick, talking to himself as he did so .... he made movements as if he was climbing on to the entrance door from the garden .... There was a sound of bells ringing that seemed to come from some distance. Mark stood listening .... looking above the fence at the direction from which the sound came .... he said 'bell' .... he went to the fence, peeped through it and said he could not see anything .... he mentioned that the bell had stopped ringing and then added that he wanted the bell to ring again .... He came to the blanket and walked on Mother .... he went to the other side of the garden where he picked up a stick .... with the stick he hit the bushes forcefully .... he walked towards the other bushes and kept falling for no apparent reason until he got there ... he kept falling until he reached the door .... Mother took Mark to the bath, Mark still holding the stick .... When I came to the bathroom to say goodbye to Mark, he was sitting in the water holding the stick with two hands, standing it on the bottom of the bath between his legs, as if it was a steering stick of a plane that he was "driving".

When I entered the living room I found a group situation, a small group consisting of Mark, Ruth and Moran, "glued" to the TV. It looked as if my arrival enabled Mark to distinguish himself from the group. He enacted it physically, making physical contact with me by touching my arm and then trying to pull the chair. [It appears similar to the theme of changing hats, Observations 9, 8]. It seemed that the closeness of the group

created a somewhat claustrophobic atmosphere: "it was impossible to move without stepping on someone". From a group process point of view, that is an element inherent in the structure of a group, in order to leave the group one has to step on someone. In other words: in order to leave the group one has to be strong and resilient. On an unconscious level that might be experienced as a violent act. It seems as if the fact that Mark felt strong and managed to leave the group developed into a provocation: the fork he had stolen and later on hanging himself on Moran's neck. Both Moran and Ruth managed not to be pulled into the provocation.

In the sequence that developed with the straw, it seems that Mark took further steps in the process of separating from the group. The element of an experience of violence became more salient in that sequence. Throwing the straw and the can out of the window seemed to be the ultimate act of leaving the confining skin of the group. When Mother told him to go and bring back the juice and the straw, it seemed that he finally achieved what he had been aiming at since the beginning of the observation: "to go outside".

It is difficult to find out the meaning of the rational discussion as to whether cutting the bush was constructive or destructive; whether Mother was turning a blind eye to the fact that it was destructive. Mark's question, "it's good?" seems to indicate that he was waiting for the adults to make a decision as to quality of his action. Though the decision was that it was permissible to cut the branches, it seems as if Mark was left with a problem about which he could not decide. As happened with the straw, it took him a long time to arrive at a definite decision, which he discarded. It seemed that the same thing happened over the issue of the bush. It was probably destructive and the element of an experience of some violence was inherent in it as well.

At that point the central scene became the picnic in the garden. It seems as if the planes with which he was preoccupied represented something that was out of his reach and out of the binding of the group he seemed to feel he was in. In this sense it seemed that the picnic had a function: he managed to bring a part of the group outside (Moran), and to reorganise it there. Later on he moved to a part of the garden where Mother and I

could not see him and then we moved into the garden. Thus, it seemed as if he was breaking up the group, reconstructing it outside twice.

When Mark stepped on Mother his behaviour seems to be quite aggravating and in a way similar to the sequence when he was hanging on Moran's neck earlier in the observation. It turned into a loving game as well, but it seemed as if both Mark and Mother had some difficulty in defining aggression for what it was. The same element seemed to be in cutting the bush and in using the straw as a pistol but saying that it was just a straw. Poking the cheese, spreading the margarine for the ants and trying to take the burning cigarette seemed to be a process of escalation.

Standing by the wall doing movements as if he was climbing seems to be an enactment of his wish to leave the group (similar to the act of throwing the straw and the juice out of the window). It seems as if he was quite intent in his wish to climb and he went on doing it by the door.

In the sequence with the bells it seems as if Mark was preoccupied with the issue of being different from the group. The sounds of the bell and probably the planes earlier on were two things that were out of the control of the group. In a culture of a group there is constant joining of things together which create a pressure to unify and makes it very difficult to be different, to be an individual. The bell and the planes seemed to represent the other, outside of the confining belt of the group. From the development of the observation it seems as if Mark sensed or realised that there was a part of himself that wanted to be different from the group, perhaps he felt in that sense like a black brick in a wall of grey bricks. One wonders as to being different, in what terms. Was it the fact that he was a male in a group that usually consisted of women? Was it in terms of being allowed to keep some aspect of his character, for example being an aggressive male, which was difficult to keep in that group? Clearly, as one can see in that observation, being overtly aggressive was not a simple matter to Mark. On another level, it seems that the bell and the planes were linked to the observer, as one representing or being the other. Indeed, almost always when I arrived to observe I found a small group in a static situation, dependent on something or someone who would come in from outside. A situation

similar to the one found in Ibsen's plays: the stranger who comes from outside to whom everyone turns. Then there is an interaction facilitated by the stranger, which moves the play to the next scene. The outsider keeps the movement and enables development. [One can see a similar development in relation to the observer in Observations 8, 9].

Mark again stepped on Mother and it was turned again into a loving game. Stepping seems to be quite aggressive, though covertly. When Mark hit the bushes with the stick he seemed to be in a fighting mode, overtly aggressive. Then came the sequence in which he kept falling for no apparent reason. It seems as if once he was in a fighting mode he created the unavoidable, the falls. Hitting, Mark seemed to feel strong. Falling, he seemed to be saying: "I'm just a little weak boy and not a strong boy". It seems as if, as aggression is not acceptable, though not explicitly, one is not allowed to be a fascist or an Israeli conqueror or a little boy playing with a gun (the straw was just a straw and not a pistol). This, in turn, contributed to his confusion regarding the quality of his male identification being constructive or destructive.

Taking the observation as a whole, it seems that my arrival enabled Mark to start distinguishing himself from the group. It seems plausible to assume that it was linked to Mark's male identifications, touching my arm and feeling the hair on it, the shape of the objects he played with, *e.g.*, straw, scissors, stick. It seemed as if Mark himself was confused about the male part of himself as to whether it was destructive or constructive. That was reflected in his ambivalence which I pointed out and the long time it had taken him to arrive at a definite decision as to what was the quality of thing that he was doing. His activities and the objects he was playing with throughout the observation represented a struggle for identity.

He was hanging onto the stick he had found and took it with him to the bath. Doing so he seemed to be holding on to some male part of his identity.



## 5.27. The Move to the New House.

As observations proceeded into the sixth month, it seems that whenever an intimate situation Mark had with Mother was interrupted, Mark did not make an alternative link with another adult, but rather, turned to an intense play with some object he selected for that purpose. It seems that there was little middle ground: either he was very close to Mother or he was intensely playing with objects. For example (Observation 19, 26.5.88, pp. 207-214): "Mother was lying on the mattress with Mark .... his head on Mother's chest, .... holding the bottle, drinking .... and gently stroking Mother's chin .... There was a telephone call for Mother .... Mark brought from the garden a short, thin branch .... He got a hammer toy .... He got a ladle and put it in and out of the ladle .... He picked up a straw and walked around holding it ...."

It seems that when Mark is with Mother he is in a state of dependence. When Mother is not with him he turns to an internal object, investing a lot of meaning in the objects he had selected externally - the hammer, the ladle, the branch and the straw. The objects were different, but there seems to be a uniformity in their shape. In being so intensely preoccupied with these objects, Mark seems to be in identification with an internal father represented by them. One wonders whether the tendency to create the private space in the past developed into this intense play with objects.

At the beginning of June they moved to the new house in West London. For the first few weeks they lived on a building site and the situation was quite chaotic. The new house consisted of two floors shared by four people. On the ground floor a man friend and another woman, each with their own room. Kitchen and toilet are shared. On the first floor are Moran, Ruth, Mark and Mother. To begin with Mark and Ruth shared a room but later on it was divided by a partition wall. Moran had for herself a small niche, a loft conversion above the corridor. Mother had a small room, a loft conversion above the living room. Once they settled in the new house it had more space and that enabled all of them to have more privacy.

Ruth was now hardly ever present during the observations, and usually she was busy doing her own things in her room. The kitchen became the area where in most of the observations the adults sat talking while drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. Mark seemed to take possession of the living room where I usually found him eating, playing or watching TV, when I came.

It felt not only as if each of them had more privacy but also that some process of separation had taken place, separation between adults and children and between the children themselves as if it were reflected in the geography of the new house. Orna's relationship with Harry became much closer and, although not living there, he spent much time in that house.

In the observations that followed, Mark seemed to struggle with Oedipal feelings and dramas of his internal world. One aspect of this struggle is well demonstrated (Observation 25, 27.7.88, pp. 224-228): "... A dog welcomed me as I entered .... In the living room Mark was sitting, eating and watching TV. Harry was sitting behind him .... the dog came towards Mark, who told it anxiously to go away .... Mark put the chair in different positions on the table ... The dog came to the table and licked the food. Mark said it would eat the chair .... Mark took the chair to the kitchen and put it inside the rubbish bin .... He watched TV sitting on Harry's lap .... The film was about two soldiers .... Mark jumped on to the floor, landing heavily and saying 'loud' .... He referred to the soldier as a "monster" .... He held the stick as if it was a sword, saying that he was going to fight the monster .... as the film ended he turned to Harry and tried to hit him with the stick, saying that Harry was the monster .... He went to the kitchen .... took the chair out of the rubbish bin .... he said that the dog had eaten his chair.

It seems that throughout the observation Mark was preoccupied with the anxiety that the chair, the food and perhaps even he himself would be eaten by the dog. Perhaps as a safety measure he put the chair on his head, the chair on the table, the chair in the rubbish bin and himself on Harry's lap. It seems as if the soldier, who later on was referred to as a "monster", represents something "loud" that is threatening the integrity of Mark's world. He reacted by jumping heavily and then got hold of the stick. As soon as the film

had finished, Harry became the monster and Mark tried to hit him. The monster and the dog seem to represent some aspect of Mark's relation with Harry.

At the beginning of the observation it appeared as if Mark managed to keep a splitting (Klein, 1946) between the good aspect of his relationship with Harry, sitting on his lap watching TV, and the bad aspect of his relationship, the rivalry. The splitting collapsed. The good Harry in Mark's mind could not contain the bad Harry and then he came to me. It seemed that I was no help in that sense either.

Then came the declaration that the chair was eaten. The declaration seemed to reflect a depressive anxiety: Mark was the chair eaten by Harry; perhaps he had lost his chair to Harry and as a result it was put amongst the rubbish. It appeared as if Mark had a notion that the little boy has already lost by arriving in the world, that he was the evidence that Father had won Mother. In this context the different locations of himself: inside the house, on the floor, on Harry, and the different locations of the chair were Mark's way of trying to understand his relative location in the Oedipal relationship. In this complicated emotional situation there seemed to be a mixture of a threatening object that Mark was afraid would devour him, the dog, together with an object that had a more concrete shape, the stick with which he tried to hit Harry. As I pointed out, it appeared as if Mark experienced Harry as a rival who might take Mother's attention. When he was in this state of mind he seemed to experience his container as a rubbish container. In the observation he seemed to feel that his secure world with Mother was about to be eaten by a man, Harry.

It looks as if there was a similar situation in my relationship with Mark and Mother. At least I felt that when I concentrated on one of them in the observation, that I was rejecting the other.

It appeared that sex, and his feelings about it, was another aspect of life with which Mark was grappling as the observations came to an end. This is well demonstrated by Observation 26, (11.8.88, pp. 229-233): "... Mark was in the bath .... He kept bringing a bottle of shampoo to his mouth as if he was drinking .... He said, 'Drinking beer' .... He held the plug observing its hollow part .... He drank the water from the plug .... He put the plug

on his sole .... observing it there .... He placed the plug on his toe, observing it there .... He put the plug on his penis observing it there .... He put the plug on his sole at different points, observing it at each point and then moving it to another point as if he was searching for some "right" location for the plug .... He said, 'Hugging', and kept moving the plug on his sole .... He was sitting and eating the soup and playing with the pipes and the car .... He built a tower and gave it to Mother to hold .... The car drove around the soup .... and then inside the pipe - like a tunnel. The car started bumping slowly and tenderly into the pipes .... It looked like a representation of bumping rather than an accident .... the car dipped into the soup .... He tried to feed me with the soup .... He was watching TV as he was eating .... He said, 'The man is sitting inside the shark'".

Playing with the plug seems to be linked to a phantasy about what fitted to what and where, perhaps a phantasy about an intercourse. In Mark's mind there seems to be a notion of a hole and something that went inside it, the plug on his toe and on his penis, but he seems to be unsure as what and where. The reference to hugging seems to point in that direction, what happened when people were hugging. It seems as if in this sequence Mark is questioning the nature of relationships - what belonged to where, puzzled about what happened when adults had a relationship.

The play with the car: inside the pipe, the bumping, pushing and the dipping inside the soup, all of it seemed to be a representation of an intercourse. In all this sequence one gets the feeling of a sublimation of some violent element but still, the quality is not of violence as such. Trying to feed Mother seemed to be a part of it as well. Perhaps it was a way of saying: "I can feed you as well, is my penis not good enough?" The observation seems to have an oral focus throughout it: the bottle Mark was playing as if he was drinking beer, drinking the water from the plug and from the bottom of the bath, dipping the car in the soup and trying to feed Mother. The shark, to which he referred, seems to be linked to the oral focus as well. The oral focus seemed to be a central element in what appears to be a representation of an intercourse. It seems as if Mark was trying to understand what happened in an intercourse and hugging. His answer seems to be that "people were feeding each other" but there was a part that was biting, the shark.

Trying to consider sex, Mark seems to feel that he is marginalised by the adult's relationship, some feeling like "my penis is not interesting any more". Perhaps in this context trying to find the right location of the plug on his sole was a way of working out his location in a triangular relationship.

### 5.27 Summary

I described the process in which the observer became distinguished from a visitor, and the element of Mark's possessiveness of both Mother and the observer in the process of building relationships between them. The positive and negative aspects of Mark's tendency to create a private space were described, as well as the formation of groups.

It looks as if once the observer gained a well defined status, a process of separation from the group has begun, the observer being a pre-condition for this process. The process consisted of a formation of vantage point and a combined object. This in turn enabled Mark to be in a state of mind of exploration of the different parts of himself. This eventually led to a clearer gender identification and a struggle with the qualities attached to maleness. A further development was facilitated with the move to the new house and Mother's close relationship with her boyfriend, leading to Mark's preoccupation with Oedipal relationships.

As with Mina it is useful to consider a wider range of variables than just those of the internal world.

(1) Clearly the mother was well supported, in looking after Mark, by a network of friends and by the other single mother with whom she shared the flat. It is reasonable to assume that without this support it would have been much more difficult for Orna to function both as an effective mother and as a professional woman in the way she did. As regards Mark he found support in his relationship with Ruth and in the children's group. The grandparents, although not looming large in their lives, clearly kept both Mark and Orna in mind and kept the link alive by sending letters and presents to Mark.

**(2) On the negative side the mother worked long hours, leaving the house early in the morning and returning home at 6 p.m.. She was often tired and irritable at the end of the day.**

**(3) The mother was well educated, and a skilled professional in her field. She was independent financially, and was able to maintain a reasonable standard of living, Her self-esteem was high.**

**CHAPTER SIX**

**KAREN**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **KAREN**

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## **6.1 RESULTS: KAREN**

### **6.11 The Initial Contact**

I got in touch with Tina through the local Social Services' office in the area in which she was living. I had approached them to help me to find single mothers and their babies for the purpose of my research.

Her worker in Social Services, who had known her for five years already, thought she would like to take part in the research and would find it helpful, especially as she was experiencing some difficulties with her daughter, Karen, at that time, whom Tina found 'demanding, clingy and fretful'. The child was having sleeping difficulties, and at that time often suffered from urinary infections and a 'chesty' chest. The worker expressed her concern about Karen's health.

Tina's first contact with Social Services was ten years ago, in 1978, when she and her husband, Christopher, applied to become foster parents. Because of an unsatisfactory police record held by Christopher (a record unknown to Tina), their application was rejected. Four years later, Christopher left home but paid maintenance to Tina until 1984. Then she approached Social Services and since then she has been getting social security and is in continual contact with her worker, especially regarding her difficulties with her children.

The worker contacted Tina to ask her permission to be approached by me and explained to her the aim of the research as I had described it. Tina told her she would not mind taking part in the research.

I then phoned Tina, who agreed to take part in the research. I suggested that we might meet to discuss the purpose of the observations and to see whether she felt comfortable with me as someone who would come to her home to observe her and Karen once a week for six months before she agreed to have me as an observer. I went to see her at home a week later.

Tina lives in a terraced house on a council estate. It is a modern estate, consisting of terraced houses, five houses in each row. Each house has a small garden in front of the house and a somewhat bigger garden at the back. Most of the gardens in the front are well looked after; the street is clean and the environment has a pleasant feeling. Tina's place is well looked after: the garden has some grass and flowers and the windows are 'shining' with no trace of dust on them. The flat is tidy and pleasant. In the hall opposite the entrance door are stairs leading to three bedrooms that I have never seen. On the right is the entrance to the living room and a corridor leading to the kitchen and the toilet (neither of which I have seen during the period that I came as an observer). On the window sill left of the entrance door are always a few coats and a small pile of magazines. The living room is quite big, but the large, heavy three-piece suite covered with a strongly patterned dralon dominates the room and creates a feeling of crowdedness. At the far end of the room are a sofa and two armchairs; there is a cupboard in the right-hand corner behind the armchair that reaches almost to the ceiling, leaving a gap of two feet between the cupboard and the ceiling on which were a few ornaments. On the wall opposite the living room door is a heavily framed popular print of a mountain view. There are some ornaments on the window sill above the T.V. and in the corner there is an assortment of toys and games in a tidy pile. (See plan: Appendix p.286).

Tina always looks a little tired and moves heavily, as someone who carries a heavy weight on her back. She has a pale, rounded face with small light brown eyes that move restlessly, and when looking at me I have the feeling of being blamed for something. She has short black hair with some silver in it and she wears no make up. She wears plain, simple clothes and on the whole looks unkempt, a bit down in the mouth. Her lips are pulled down and this gives a somewhat bitter expression to her face. She looks older than her actual age of 36. Karen, on the other hand, is always dressed in what seems to me a new dress, very pretty, with white socks and shiny shoes. Karen's clothes make a contrast with Tina's. Karen is thin and delicate looking, somewhat fragile. She has a very pale face with big, light blue eyes. The skin on her face is tight and her expression quite blank, and this, combined with her eyes, gives the quality of a mask.

In the initial meeting, we discussed the purpose of the observation as previously described. Tina said that she didn't mind if she and Karen were observed and asked whether I expected her to do any special activities with Karen. I said I did not expect anything of this kind and that I would not like to interfere with their life by putting any extra demands on them, only that I would come to their home as an observer and would observe whatever it is that they are doing. I said I would not write anything during the observations but would do so afterwards. I felt that she was passive and did not dare to enquire about the purpose of the observations or about me, as if she felt that she had no right to do so. She had the same attitude, it seemed to me, throughout the six-month period of observation.

I asked Tina whether there was anything she wanted to know about me which she thought was important for her before she would agree to have me as an observer. Tina said she knew from her worker that I was a child psycho-therapist and that I was doing this research. She asked about my accent and wanted to know where I came from. I then asked about the other children: Kevin, aged seven and a half, and Dora, aged ten. I asked whether Karen had any contact with her own father and learned that she did not see her father and that the father of Kevin and Dora did not keep in touch with them either. We then set a time for the observations and agreed to start the following week.

### 6.12 Family Background

During the six-month period of observation I learned more about Tina's painful and deprived life story and that of her children. She was born and grew up in a small town in the south. She was the first child in the family and had seven siblings. Her mother was pregnant with Tina before she married, but this was always concealed and her mother used to say that Tina was born premature. Her father was an alcoholic and had never worked. Often her father hit her mother and the children when he came home drunk. She described her father as a person who had never cared for his family. Her mother she described as a very depressed woman who was constantly ill. As neither of her parents

functioned as parents, from the time she was very young Tina had to mother her brothers and sisters as well as her parents.

A few times during the period that I observed, Tina repeated the story of her mother's suicide attempt: when she was 13 years old. Her mother had taken an overdose and Tina had to take her to hospital. Her father was sitting drunk in a chair and, had it not been for Tina, her mother would have died.

Her parents separated when Tina was 11 or 13 - neither Tina nor her mother could remember exactly, and since then she has hardly seen him. The father lives until this day in a hostel for single men and Tina has no contact with him.

When Tina was 20, she came to London and worked as an auxiliary nurse in a hospital for children. At that period she met Christopher, whom she married. A few months before Tina got married her mother married her cousin and had a child who was stillborn and whom they named Alex before he was buried.

Dora was born in 1977 and a year later Tina and Christopher had a second baby, also named Alex. Tina said she did not know that her mother's dead baby had the same name, and she found out about it only at the christening. As far as she knew, no one in the family was called Alex. When Alex was a year old he developed a malignant tumour on his jaw and died within three weeks of the diagnosis.

Kevin was born in 1979. In 1982 Christopher left home. At that time Christopher's parents divorced and his father remarried. Christopher moved to live with his step-sister, the daughter of his father's second wife.

As for the reasons for Christopher leaving, Tina told me two different versions. In one version, after they had been turned down as foster parents because of his police record, a record unknown to Tina until then, Christopher had stopped speaking to Tina as he had not wanted her to know about his record. This had ruined the marriage. In the other version, it was Dora's continual 'grizzling' that caused Christopher to leave.

Christopher saw the two children for a while. He used to see them in his mother-in-law's place where Tina took them and he used to come after she left, as he had not wanted to see her. Tina stopped this arrangement as she thought 'he should come and take them

from home if he wanted to see them or he could not see them at all', and since then, the children have not seen him. For a few years he used to send letters and presents for the children, but Tina stopped that as well, as she thought it was upsetting the children.

Karen was born in 1985 after a relationship that lasted a few months with her father, Martin, who was an assistant manager at the place where Tina was working at the time. Martin saw Karen twice in the first few months of her life but since then has had no contact with Tina or Karen. Tina still has warm feelings for Martin and does not blame him for deserting her, as 'it was not his fault; it was an accident'. When pregnant with Karen, Tina at first thought of having an abortion and then later on considered having her adopted but 'decided against it'.

### 6.13. Summary of a Sample of Observations

The following is a summary of a sample of observations:

#### Observation 1, 11.9.87, pp. 85-87

I came in to the living room and sat down. Mother went to the kitchen to make tea. As she was about to leave the room she picked up a teddy bear from the floor and threw it at Karen, smiling at me in a way that made me feel we were sharing something.

She and Karen, who had meanwhile joined her, came back into the room with the tea. Mother sat in the armchair and Karen, who did not move away from her, sat on Mother's lap, 'digging' herself deep into Mother's chest. After a while Mother told Karen to get a book. Karen fetched one, a storybook with pictures, and sat on Mother's lap. Karen opened the book and looked at it, Mother asking questions about the pictures, such as, "What's this?"; "How many?", to which Karen responded. When Karen did not answer, Mother gave the answer and Karen repeated it after her. As they sat and read I had a strong feeling of being left out. When they had finished reading the book Mother told Karen to get another one, which they proceeded to read in the same way, Karen again seated on her mother's lap. When that book was finished, Mother turned to me and began talking to me. Karen moved to the sofa and sat there, leaning on the back of the

sofa with her legs stretched forward on the seat. As she sat there, I had a feeling of space and felt the association of her now being 'outside'. Karen commented about my watch and about Mother's watch. She went to the corner of the room and fetched a birthday card which Dora had given her. She sat on Mother's lap and with Mother's help wrote her name on the card. Mother told her to put the pen back in its case but Karen refused. She got down from Mother's lap and sat on the floor beside her, scribbling on the card. Again she climbed on to Mother's lap, and dropped the card onto the floor. Karen asked Mother to pick it up but she refused. Karen got down from her lap and went to sit on the sofa, leaning over the arm. Mother told Karen sharply to sit properly. Karen went to Mother, saying she wanted to write her name, but Mother said it was already written. Mother then fetched a plastic bag containing plastic letters, which she shook out. She told Karen to find the letter D, 'D for dog', and so on with other letters. Karen cooperated for a while and then started to make mistakes. Mother stopped playing, leaning backwards in her chair, and I had the impression that she was 'lost'. Karen then initiated the same game and after a while Mother joined her. Then Karen got her potty, put it next to Mother, and sat on it with her back to Mother, and urinated.

Observation 4. 2.10.87. pp. 92-96

I received a message from Mother three days before the observation to the effect that Karen was in hospital, seemingly suffering from an asthmatic attack.

As I entered, Mother fetched the milk which had been left outside the front door, and Karen, returned now from hospital, immediately clung to her foot. Mother told me that Karen had been very clingy since she had come back. I went into the living room. Karen followed Mother to the kitchen to put the kettle on. They came back and Mother sat in her usual armchair. Karen immediately climbed onto her lap, clinging to her, asking for a cuddle. Mother cuddled her and Karen turned to face me. Mother picked up a colouring book, saying she wanted to look at a drawing that she had coloured. Karen took three crayons in her hand. She dropped one onto the floor and said that she was holding three crayons. Mother told her that she now only had two. Karen scribbled on

Mother's drawing and Mother, in a jokey way, said "What did you do to my drawing?" It developed into a game in which Mother scolded Karen for ruining her drawing. Then they both went to the kitchen to make tea. After a while they came back with a cup of tea for me. As soon as Mother sat down, Karen climbed onto her lap. She asked for a cuddle, clinging to Mother, and then said, "Don't go out of my sight". Mother turned the cuddle into a game of tickling, tickling Karen under her arm, and Karen laughed loudly. Tina complained jokingly that she needed a new name and a new lap as Karen always came to her saying: "Mum, a cuddle". Karen took the colouring book and started scribbling on it. Mother told me about Karen's visit to the hospital - she had had a throaty cough and had difficulty in breathing. She was kept in the hospital for three days, inhaling four times daily. Tina said that she tried to locate Karen's father as she wanted to find out whether there was asthma in his family. While she was talking to me, Karen turned to Mother and clung to her. [As they sat huddled together, I experienced a feeling of claustrophobia, of being trapped in a spider's web]. Mother initiated a game, drawing Karen's hand on a blank space in the colouring book. Karen placed her hand on the book and Mother traced round it with a crayon. When Mother finished, Karen lifted her hand from the page, looked at the drawing, smiled, and said, "My hand". Mother then told Karen to draw her own hand but each time that Karen tried to do so she would suddenly pull her hand away from the paper, as if she felt anxious. She got off Mother's lap and tried again to draw her hand while standing, but again she pulled her hand away as soon as the crayon touched the paper. After a few times of unsuccessfully trying to draw her hand, she held the crayon on her dress in such a way that it might resemble a penis. Then Mother drew Karen's hand again. Karen climbed onto Mother's lap, clinging to her and hugging her and Mother hugged her in return. Then Karen, still sitting on Mother's lap, asked her to write 'Karen S' inside the drawing of the hand, which Mother did. Karen clung to Mother, at the same time looking at me and drawing attention to the fact that I had a cup of tea, and that I wore a watch and socks. Karen bent over and picked up a teddy bear. She put the bear on Mother's lap with her, and then moved to sit on the armchair beside Mother. After a while she fetched a doll and



began to hit Mother with it. Mother sat back in the armchair, shielding her face with her arm. Karen threw the doll onto Mother and went to sit on the sofa. Mother threw the doll back at Karen and it developed into a throwing game. Karen got very excited and stood up on the sofa. Mother stopped the game and very sharply ordered Karen to sit down otherwise she might fall, and Karen immediately sat down on the sofa. [The feeling of claustrophobia which I had previously experienced now changed into relief and a sense of spa

ce]. Karen fetched a TV toy, climbed once more onto Mother's lap, and commented on the fact that the figures did not have shoes. Mother said that perhaps she would give them Karen's shoes. Karen said that her uncle would smack someone. Mother explained to me that Karen used to play a smacking game with her uncle. Karen again drew attention to my socks and my watch, and then asked for a lollipop. Mother complained to me about Karen's eating habits and told me that Karen was bottle fed from the first day and that she hadn't breast fed her as she herself was undernourished.

Observation 7, 23.10.87, pp. 100-103.

When I arrived, Karen greeted me, smiling at me and saying hello. On entering the living room I found that it was completely altered: the furniture had been moved and there was a feeling of space. (See plan on p. 287). A small table was now in the centre of the room and all Karen's toys were put into a hall cupboard. Mother went to put the kettle on while Karen stayed with me in the living room. She picked up an empty puzzle box from the floor and brought it to me, and in answer to my question told me that she and Mother had mended it. Mother returned and sat on the sofa. Karen took the box to her and together they mended it with sellotape, Mother giving Karen instructions as to where to stick the sellotape in a tone I had not before heard her use, rather authoritarian and harsh. They finished mending the box. Karen sat next to Mother and said, "Watch out, I can see you", while threatening Mother with her fist, Mother likewise responding. Then Karen said she wanted to urinate. Mother told her she had only just done so, but Karen insisted. Mother started tickling Karen and it developed into a game in which Karen

pushed her head under Mother's arm, saying she was in the garden. Mother, in the spirit of the game, said it was too cold to be outside. They continued playing this game, but now Karen was on Mother's lap, bending backwards while Mother held her hand, and when her head was down she pretended she was outside.

Karen got down onto the floor and fetched a book, which she took with her to the sofa, sat there, and opened the book at pictures of a hospital. She described the details of the pictures: a child, a nurse, a doctor. Mother joined in and a conversation developed: "Do you remember the doctor who looked after you?", the nurse. Karen closed the book, saying it was night time in the hospital and the children were sleeping. She asked Mother to scratch her behind her knee; Mother refused and told me that Karen had eczema. Karen sat next to Mother, still holding the book. She opened it again and in a story-telling voice recounted the action of the pictures: she is going swimming with her daddy ... now she is jumping into the water ... Mother joined in and it developed into a conversation, 'Perhaps her daddy is teaching her how to jump'. Karen turned the page to other pictures, such as trains, a motorcycle, Mother pointing to the objects and asking Karen what they are. Karen continued to look at the pictures while Mother got another book, telling Karen that they would read that one. Karen put her book on one side and Mother pointed to pictures in the new book, asking Karen questions about them. Karen pushed that book away and returned to the other one, looking attentively at the pictures. For no apparent reason, she said that Grandmother was a naughty girl because she had smacked Karen on her head, and then said that she wanted to urinate. Mother said no and started to tickle her. Again this developed into a game, this time Mother picked her up, holding her on her knee in a breast-feeding position.

Observation 11. 4.12.87. pp. 108- 112.

I went into the living room and sat there while Karen and Mother went to the kitchen to put the kettle on. When they joined me, Mother told me that Karen had said that Yaron wanted milk instead of tea. At that point, Karen began a discussion with her mother as to whether or not I had milk and sugar in my tea. Mother started to do a jigsaw puzzle,

Karen watching her while she drank her tea. Karen finished her tea and put her cup in the kitchen. When Karen was out of the room, Mother told me that she had tried to get in touch with Martin, Karen's father, while she was in hospital, to find out whether there was a history of asthma in his family ... Some times she would like his family to know about Karen's existence. [At this moment, Karen returned, sat on the sofa saying the alphabet, Mother continuing to talk to me] ... It was not Martin's fault she had become pregnant ... She had thought of having an abortion but was unable to do so ... She had thought of giving Karen up for adoption but then decided against it.

Just then Karen started spelling her name and drew Mother into helping her to spell. Mother spelled out the letters and Karen scribbled away as if she were writing. Then Mother sat in her armchair in silence while Karen coloured in the book. [At that moment I felt painfully depressed]. Karen wanted Mother to spell her surname, which she did; Karen went on colouring. Karen went to Mother, wanting to climb on her knee and asking for a cuddle. Mother told her she must draw on the floor. Karen stood by the armchair, staring at the colouring book and then staring at the armchair. For a while she stood motionless, staring at the armchair. [Again, this sequence evoked painful feelings in me]. Karen then sat on the sofa and started to count different things in the colouring book, asking her mother about the different objects she was colouring. Mother sat silently, not reacting to her questions. Karen fetched a viewer and, climbing on to Mother's lap, sat there silently looking at the pictures; Mother yawned, almost falling asleep. I became more and more depressed.

Karen fetched the colouring book, climbed up again on to Mother's lap, and sat there scribbling in the book.

Observation 15. 15.1.88. pp. 113-116.

When I arrived, Karen refused to say hello to me, and Mother jokingly told her off, asking her where her manners were. Carol, a friend of mother's, was in the living room. I sat down and Mother light-heartedly asked Karen what Yaron wanted to drink, to which Karen replied, 'Coffee'. The three of them went to the kitchen and after a very long while

came back with the drinks. Karen sat forward on Mother's lap, drinking. Mother said, "Karen is really independent now; she does not follow me all the time and plays with other children ... there are no sleeping problems any more; she goes to her room at half past six and wants to go to sleep".

Karen went over to the table and touched the puzzle on the table; she told me that she had had it for Christmas. She moved back to Mother and leaned on her lap. Mother said to her, "You are independent". Karen said in a babyish voice, "No". Karen said she wanted to eat but Mother said it was not yet time, she would have to wait a while.

Karen got a doll and a toy bath and put it on the arm of Carol's armchair. Mother jokingly told me that Karen had been given three new dolls for which she had chosen easy names, so that there would be no problem in remembering them. As Karen played, she hit her head and started to cry. Mother comforted her, hugging and stroking her, and while doing so she looked at me, smiling. Karen calmed down, moved to the table, and until the end of the session continuously constructed the four small puzzles that were there.

Observation 18. 5.2.88. pp. 119-123.

As I sat down in the living room, both Mother and Karen started picking up toys and puzzles from the floor, tidying up. At some point Mother picked up a soft toy, Dandy, and threw it at Karen, saying that if she puts it on the floor again, then .... Dandy missed Karen, who picked it up and put it in the hall. Mother went to the kitchen to make tea. Karen brought Dandy to me, saying, "This is Dandy", and showed it to me. She put Dandy on the table and went to the kitchen.

They came back with the drinks. Before she sat down, Mother turned off the sound from the TV so that there was a picture but no sound. Karen wanted to turn it on but Mother forbade her to do so. Karen watched TV and then said she wanted to listen to it. Mother said, "No, you are not going to". Karen insisted but Mother said, "No, you want to chat, you are a big chatterer and you will not listen anyway". Karen sat on the sofa, drinking silently and staring ahead. [I had the feeling of being lost as I observed her].

After a while she brought me a colouring book and showed me a picture that was coloured perfectly, saying that she had coloured it. Mother said that Dora had done it. Karen wrote the second half of her name on the picture.

Karen went to the paper rack and looked inside, saying she was searching for cards. Extremely slowly, almost lifelessly, she took out a few cards and stared at them with glazed eyes. [Again I had this painful feeling of being lost as I observed her]. Mother stood up, went to the paper rack, took out all the cards, handed them to Karen and then sat down on the sofa. Karen stood holding the cards, staring into space. After a while she slowly sat down on the floor and divided the cards into two piles. Mother said, "I see that you want to play cards with me, but I don't want to play". Karen said, "Yes", and Mother said, "No" a couple of times. Then Mother moved to sit next to Karen on the floor. Karen dealt the cards very slowly, almost lifelessly. They played Snap for a little while, and then Karen said that she wanted to play a different game and went into the hall and brought back a plastic bag. Mother moved to sit on the sofa. Karen took a piece of Duplo from the bag and holding it as if it was a gun, said "bang bang", and did the same with a giraffe she took out of the bag, saying that it was a gun. She walked the giraffe on the table towards Mother until it almost touched Mother's knee with its mouth, but then it fell on the floor. Karen picked up the giraffe from the floor and another doll she had found there. Again the giraffe almost touched Mother's knee. Then Karen sat on the sofa beside Mother and said that the doll had fallen and hurt itself. She wanted Mother to kiss it and comfort it, but Mother said that Karen should do so. Again Karen asked Mother to kiss the doll and again she refused to do so.

Karen climbed onto Mother's lap and sat there. Mother picked up another doll and pushed it into Karen's hands, telling her to comfort the doll. Karen asked where the doll had hurt itself, to which Mother replied that she did not know. For a while Karen sat there, holding both dolls, staring in front of herself with glazed eyes [yet again I had the feeling of being lost]. Then Karen said that the doll had hurt its hand and she kissed the doll's hand. Karen sat on Mother's lap, hugging both dolls and smiling. She then intentionally dropped the doll Mother had given her. Mother jokingly told her off,

saying "How would you feel if I dropped you on the floor like that?" It developed into a game in which Mother laid Karen on the floor next to the doll, both of them giggling. Karen stood up and put the dolls and the giraffe inside the plastic bag. She announced that she was going to the toilet and went out of the room. After a while she came back and as soon as she entered the room she asked, "Where is Yaron's cup?" (it was next to me).

Observation 22, 4.3.88. pp. 126-130.

As I approached the door I heard Karen crying inside. Mother opened the door and Karen stood next to her, crying, and did not stop crying when she saw me. Mother told me that Karen was being silly. I entered the living room and discovered Sarah, Mother's sister, sitting on the sofa. Mother continued the conversation which she had possibly started before I arrived, which was to do with the crying. She said to Karen, "Go and tell Sarah what you want. I am not going to do it for you". This made Karen cry even more. She followed Mother who was going to sit in the armchair. She stood next to the chair, crying, and Mother just repeated the same sentence and so it went on for a while. Then Karen, still crying, sat on the centre of the sofa and Mother went to make some tea. Just before she left the room she said, "Go and tell Sarah what you want". After a few seconds Sarah, who was sitting on the left end of the sofa, moved close to Karen, who was still crying, and cuddled her to her breast. Sarah talked to her, trying to persuade her to tell her what she wanted, but Karen continued to cry, staring in front of her. After a while Sarah said to her, "If you do not tell me I will not know" - very apologetically but very softly. Karen stopped crying and sat very silently, staring forward into space, but she did not answer Sarah, who went on trying to convince Karen to tell her what was the matter. Mother came back with tea for everybody and sat in her armchair. Karen came and stood next to Mother, who told her to speak for herself and that she could not do it for her. At this moment Karen wanted a cuddle from her. Mother would not give her a cuddle but put her on her lap. When Karen was sitting on Mother's lap she stared into space with glazed eyes.

Mother then told me that Karen wanted to go in Sarah's car to the shops but she wanted Mother to ask Sarah. Turning to Karen she said, "It is no good asking me, is it?" and Karen agreed and said "No". Mother said, "You have to ask Sarah and not me". Karen nodded. Mother said "Yes" and Karen whispered "Yes". Mother repeated all this sentence and Karen whispered the right answers in the right places. Then Karen bent down and picked up a small plastic bag that contained coins. Karen held the bag and looked at the coins inside it. Mother told her to count the coins. Karen just stared at the bag but did nothing. Mother told her to count them. Karen did not move and went on staring. Mother took the coins out of the bag, held them in her palm and told Karen to put them back into the bag and count them. Mother started counting and after she had counted a few of them Karen started whispering the number, following Mother, and then she started to count the coins herself. She put all the coins in the bag and sat on Mother's lap, holding the bag and staring at it. Now her expression was different - she did not cry and did not seem lost. Her movements were not slow any more but were more definite, and after a few seconds she smiled. She was sitting with a constant smile on her face, her face smooth and not crinkled up. Even when she cried her face was not screwed up, but smooth. The only difference between crying and smiling was the absence of tears. She took the coins out of the bag, held them, stared for a few seconds at them and then said that she had money. Mother said "You have 7p" and Karen repeated it. Mother said she could buy half a bag of crisps with it. Karen dropped a coin and picked it up and again held all the coins in her hand and stared at them. She then put the coins back in the bag. While doing this she dropped one, picked it up and put it in the bag and again took it out and held it in her hand and again put it in the bag. From this point onwards until the end of the observation Karen held the bag, once in a while taking some coins out and then returning them to the bag.

## 6.14. Emerging Patterns

As observation proceeded some meaningful patterns emerged in respect of the activities and objects with which Karen was preoccupied. The following is a summary of the main themes as they emerged over time:

### 6.141 Initiated Activity

#### Reading, Counting and Identifying Objects

Throughout the period of observations it was usually Mother who initiated some activity at some point after I had arrived, telling Karen to fetch a book which they would 'read', with Karen sitting on Mother's lap. The 'reading' consisted of Karen naming different objects in the pictures, identifying colours, counting the number of objects, identifying letters, writing letters. Thus for example, Observation 1: 'Mother told Karen to bring a book ... she sat on Mother's lap, looking at a story with pictures. Mother started commenting on the pictures: "What's this?" "How many?", Mother asking and Karen answering ... They did the same with another book ... Mother fetched a bag containing plastic letters, and told Karen to find the letter D, D for dog. Karen repeated the words and found the letter. The same with other letters. Even at times when the book was actually a story with pictures there was no reference to a narrative and it was always fragmented, disintegrated into numbers of objects and identification of colours or letters. Usually Karen answered Mother's questions, counting quite well, identifying letters and colours. At other times she repeated answers after Mother.

Throughout the period of observations I always observed a situation in which Mother led Karen. There was no space for Karen to decide what she wanted to do and as soon as Karen initiated something that exceeded Mother's expectations she objected or did not co-operate. Thus for example Observation 7: 'Karen looked at the pictures in the book and talked about them, imagining .... Mother brought another book, telling Karen that they would read the second book. She opened the book and, pointing at the pictures, started asking Karen, "What's this?", "How many?".'



Observation 18, : 'Mother said, "I see you want to play cards with me but I don't want to play" .... Karen wanted Mother to comfort the doll but Mother refused'.

#### 6.142 Karen's distance from Mother

The first few weeks of the observations Karen spent most of the time on Mother's lap. When not there, when she played on the floor, it was always by Mother's feet, at a distance that did not exceed more than two feet away from her mother. Whenever Mother left the room Karen would follow her. Thus for example, Observation 1, ; Observation 4, 'As she clung to Mother, Karen said, "Don't leave my sight"'.

My feeling in the counter-transference when I observed them in those positions had a claustrophobic, adhesive quality. Thus for example: Observation 1, ; Observation 4, . This distance seemed to change round about the sixth week of observations, when Karen stayed in the room for the first time, when Mother went to the kitchen and then until the end of the observation she spend the time occupied with some activity away from Mother. It seemed to correspond to my feeling of space in the counter-transference - Observation 7, .

As observations proceeded, Mother did not allow Karen to climb on to her lap. This seemed to correspond to painful feelings of depression in my counter-transference. For example, Observation 11: 'Mother did not allow Karen on the armchair after she had asked for a cuddle, saying she had to draw on the floor .... I felt painfully depressed'.

The growing distance away from Mother seemed to continue developing, and in Observation 15: 'Mother told me that Karen was really independent now, she is playing on her own, doing things on her own initiative; she does not follow Mother all the time. Indeed, she played with dolls away from Mother and then did puzzles for a very long time (Observation 15). She spent relatively little time on Mother's lap during the rest of the observations (Observation 18; Observation 22,).

## 6.2 DISCUSSION: KAREN

### 6.21 Variable Grid

<b>Subject: Mother</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Name of Child: Karen  Name of Mother: Tina  Single Mother: Yes	1: Loneliness	Yes – high degree
	2: Material deprivation	Yes – close to poverty
	3: Low self-esteem	Yes – significantly low
	4: Lack of emotional support	Yes – quite unsupported; occasional contact with social worker
	5: Child replacing partner	No
	6: Signs of depression	Yes – often deeply depressed
	7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history	Yes – a history of instability and deprivation
	8: Supportive network of friends	No – nothing effective
	9: Educational level	Low
	10: Nationality / ethnicity	White English

## Variable Grid

Subject: Child	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Karen</p> <p>Name of Mother: Tina</p> <p>Single Mother: Yes</p>	<p>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</p> <p>2: High level of anxiety</p> <p>3: Evidence of failure to separate</p> <p>4: Problems of gender identity</p> <p>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</p>	<p>Poor emotional environment</p> <p>Yes – appeared to be due to mother's inability to contain and process mental pain</p> <p>Yes – No physical separation at beginning of observations</p> <p>None observed</p> <p>Yes – two siblings do take some of the pressure of the mother's projections</p>

## 6.22 A state of merging and its associated dreads

In retrospect, it seems that the six-month observations of Karen and Tina were an endless repetition of similar situations.

The first weeks of observations, Karen spent most of the time on Mother's lap. When she played on the floor it was always by Mother's feet, at a distance that did not exceed more than two feet away from her mother. Whenever Mother left the room Karen would follow her. For example (Observation 4,), "... as Karen clung to Mother she said: 'don't leave my sight ....'"

Usually it was Mother who initiated some activity, telling Karen to bring a book which they would read. The reading consisted of Karen naming different objects in the pictures, identifying colours, counting the number of objects, identifying letters, etc. Even when the book was a story with pictures there was no reference to the process of the story, and this was always fragmented, disintegrated into numbers of objects and identification of colours and letters. At other times, Mother posed a question, answered it, and Karen repeated the answers. An illustration from Observation 1, is: "Mother told Karen to bring a book ... Mother started commenting, 'what's this?', 'how many?' ... Mother said to Karen: 'Bring D for dog'. Karen repeated the words and found the letter".

My feeling in the counter-transference as I observed them sitting together, heavily pre-occupied, was of a claustrophobic, adhesive experience. "As they sat cuddled together, I experienced a feeling of claustrophobia, as if being trapped in a spider's web" (Observation 4). This seemed to reflect Karen's and Tina's feelings in their relationship. The central quality of the relationship was adhesion (Bick, 1969). Adhesive in terms of the absence of physical distance, the absence of space to be a separated individual, and the total absence of internal space (Bion, 1962; Bick, 1969), in both Mother and Karen. Mother seems to be two-dimensional, lacking the ability to think about her emotional experiences as well as Karen's. In Bion's (1962) terms, she is a mother not capable of performing alpha function. It is therefore almost impossible for Karen and Mother to interact in a way that holds meaning, an interaction in which there is a traffic of meaning

from space to space between two objects. Instead, the meeting point is on the surface and the result is two objects clinging to each other. This appears to be the central quality of the Mother-Karen relationship.

Mother seems unable to link things together, as demonstrated by the stories that are reduced to numbers of objects and colours. The constant "educational" activities: reading, writing or counting, and identifying objects, are all training, in contrast to education. In training, one is expected to repeat or initiate technically a performance of some act without using imagination or thinking. In education, in contrast to training, one leaves space for imagination and thought.

Almost always, I was, observing a situation in which Mother led Karen rather than allowing her to initiate play or activity. There was no space for Karen to decide what she was doing or what she wanted to do. "Mother told Karen to get a book ...", : "Mother fetched letters and told Karen to find the letter D" (Observation 1) provide graphic examples.

In all these intellectual activities into which Mother constantly pushed Karen, I had no feeling of Karen being a young child. There was no space in their relationship for diversity. The only way Karen could stand up for herself was by an indirect, non-co-operative stance. So Karen made mistakes in naming and counting the different objects, calling the red white, turning a lorry into a train and a horse into a cow, succeeding in annoying Mother (Observation 1).

As an observer, almost invariably the observations evoked in me a sense of boredom because everything was so conventional: the same reading, counting and later on puzzles. It seems as if Mother has a definite concept of what is appropriate, the intellectual activities, and everything that developed in the observations had to fit within this concept or would not develop. Even when Karen was drinking or playing she had to do it appropriately. This conventionalism of Mother was so compelling that it left no life for any spontaneous process. When Karen tried to initiate something that exceeded the bounds of training, Mother objected or did not co-operate, telling Karen: "'We have already done it', or 'it's not safe'. Karen initiated a game - dropping a card on the floor and

asking Mother to pick it up. She refused ... Karen sat on the sofa ... but Mother refused to do so, saying it was already written" (Observation 1)

Mother's inability to leave space for meaning in her relationship with Karen created situations in which, in most observations, their communication failed. At times this failure escalated a process of destruction as Mother's attitude denuded the meaning of Karen's communication (Bion, 1962). For this, Karen would punish her mother, throwing a doll at her, or scribbling on a drawing done by Mother. Karen's reaction seemed to provoke Mother's anger which she would never dare to express directly during the observation. Instead she would turn it into games when she would jokingly tell Karen off for ruining her drawing, or throw the doll back at Karen. Tickling and cuddling were common at those times (Observation 7. Observation 4,). This suppressed anger appeared to be a further step in which the meaning of the anger of both of them was denuded, leading to the next escalation. Mother would stop the game when it had already become quite manic, surfacing suddenly in the middle of the game, using safety as an excuse: 'You might fall' (Observation 4). Mother's anger at those times was expressed in a distorted way. She almost never managed to prevent the game from reaching the stage of manic excitement because she was unable to acknowledge and think about Karen's feelings as well as her own. To illustrate, (Observation 4, pp. 92-96): "Karen held three crayons and dropped one onto the floor. She then said that she still had three crayons. Mother said no, she only held two. Karen scribbled on Mother's drawing. Mother told her off jokingly. It developed into a game of telling off ... Karen asked for a cuddle ... Mother turned the cuddle into a game of tickling ... Karen began to hit Mother with the doll ... She threw the doll at Mother ... Mother threw it at Karen and it developed into a throwing game ... Mother stopped the game and very sharply ordered Karen to sit down, otherwise she might fall".

As the observations proceeded, Karen's revolt against Mother's binding took other forms besides the mistakes she was making. At times it seemed that she was taking advantage of my presence to play spontaneously away from Mother when Mother was talking to

me. On other occasions she sat a doll or a teddy on Mother's lap and moved aside to sit on her own, thus putting something between her and Mother to separate them. These activities seemed to correspond to my feeling in the counter-transference of a relief from the constant adhesive quality, and it seemed to reflect Karen's feeling. (Observation 4, p. 94).

From the first observation onwards Karen used to refer to my watch, my socks and my tea, and compare them with Mother's coffee and socks and then with her own shoes, socks and drink. (Observation 1, p. 85; Observation 4, p. 94). It seemed that on those occasions Karen was identifying with me, bringing in a third person to mediate between Mother and herself.

These actions of Karen, in conjunction with my feeling in the counter-transference of having more space, appeared more often as observations proceeded, and after a few weeks of observations, I felt that a process of some separation had started taking place.

### 6.23 The hospitalisation and attempts at separation

At that stage Karen was hospitalised for three days for suspected asthma. During that time Mother tried to locate Karen's father as she "wanted to find out whether there was asthma in his family". (Observation 4, 2.10.87, p.93). Following the hospitalisation, Karen clung to Mother as she had done during the early observations. The state of merging seemed to be reappearing, but this time it evoked anxiety in both Karen and Mother. Tina's way of avoiding the merging was to reject Karen; she "turned the cuddles into tickling, complaining jokingly that she needed a new name and a new lap as Karen always came to her saying, 'Mum, a cuddle'". (Observation 4, p. 93).

Karen appeared to be trying to avoid the adhesive state by resorting to activities in which she tried to define herself as a distinct, separate person, insisting that Mother write the name Karen on her palm. (Observation 4, p. 94).

One might speculate that the merging state reappeared as a result of the fear of death due to the hospitalisation and the abrupt separation. Karen looked pale and weak and seeing her in that state I felt anxious. The anxiety and the clinging evoked strong feelings of

pain in me, a pain that probably reflected their feelings. I felt confused as to whose pain it was - was it Karen's pain or Mother's? Or both? Was Karen identifying with the pain of her object? Was Mother projecting her own pain onto Karen?

It seems that the crucial factor that made separation so difficult and eventually impossible was Mother's inability to think, especially to think through the pain of separation. Instead she flew into action. This flight into action took the form of the formation of a "second skin" (Bick, 1968), an action or a muscular activity in the service of discharging mental pain in the absence of a containing object.

Separation had the quality of tearing and dropping, in contrast to birth as a process of separation, as a result of the adhesive quality of the Mother-Karen relationship due to Mother's extreme two dimensionality. In Winnicott's terms, the pre-condition for a successful process of weaning, the mother's acknowledgment of her own hate of the baby which in turn depends on the mother's capacity to accept her own awfulness and cruelty (Winnicott, 1949), did not exist in the Mother-Karen relationship. Tina did not have the ability to accept her hate and to carry on as usual, did not have within her the ability to hate "without paying the child out" (Winnicott, 1947), that is, to contain her hate rather than act it.

At this time (Observation 7, 23.10.87, pp. 100-103), Tina re-arranged the living room. This gave a feeling of more space and perhaps reflected Tina's and Karen's feelings in their relationship. During the next few weeks they spent some time in the observations in repairing the puzzle box. (Observation 7, p. 102: "together they mended the box ...") It seemed that both had a feeling of fault linked to the process of separation that both tried to mend. Still, there was no space for thinking about the emotional experience of both Karen and Mother, and it was enacted concretely.

Tina developed a new tone in her voice when instructing Karen. I experienced it as "harsh, authoritarian and punitive" (Observation 7, p. 101). I had the feeling that the separation process had a somewhat violent quality to it. A game that Karen developed in which she was "threatening Mother with her fist, saying 'watch out, I can see you'" (Observation 7, p. 101), demonstrates this quite well.



Karen, unlike her mother, seemed to be struggling to think, and a new capacity to play as a way of digesting her emotional experiences started to emerge. Karen's difficulty seemed to be the fact that Mother did not co-operate and usually attacked Karen's capacity to be different from her. To cite one example, (Observation 7, pp. 107-108), "Karen fetched a book ... a conversation about the hospital developed ... Karen said it was night-time in the hospital and the children were sleeping. She asked Mother to scratch her behind her knee ... she turned the pages to pictures of trains and motorcycles. Mother started asking Karen, 'what is this?' ... Mother fetched another book, telling Karen that they would read that one ... Karen pushed the second book aside and returned to the first one. She said that Grandmother was a naughty girl because she had smacked Karen on her head and then she said she wanted to urinate. Mother said no and started to tickle her. It developed into a game and Mother picked her up, holding her on her knee in a breast-feeding position".

Reading the book, Karen seemed to be aware of the pain of the separation related to her hospitalisation. Then she asked Tina to scratch her behind her knee where she had eczema that had spread. The eczema that had spread seemed to be a physiological symptom expressing unprocessed mental pain. Karen asked Mother to scratch the eczema, though she could easily do it herself; presumably she wanted Mother to pay attention to that pain. Karen turned the pages and came to pictures of trains and motor cycles, objects that could be said to represent a father in their phallic quality. At that point Mother attacked her with the mindless activity, 'What is this?', which effectively destroyed any possibility of thinking and then Mother changed the book. Karen managed to fend off Mother's attack, she rejected the book Mother introduced and took the first book and searched for more pictures of motor cycles. The reference to grandmother seemed to be a reference to Mother's attacks on Karen's thinking. At that point Karen wanted to urinate, probably as she felt emotionally distressed by the attack. It seemed that Mother tickled her in order to block any awareness and was disintegrating the process of thinking that Karen had managed to keep until that point. The breast

feeding position seemed to be another step in that direction by pushing Karen to regression.

Tina's new acquired tone came at a time when she could be seen as trying to function as a father; also it would help her cope with the separation process (a mother who contains in herself a part of the personality that can function as a father, a combined object) (Klein, 1932). The difficulty was Tina's own experience of her internal objects. Often in the observations Tina referred to her own parents: an alcoholic father who was always absent and never cared for his family, and a "depressed", "hypochondriacal", "suicidal" mother. One clearly has the image of Tina as a child who had never experienced a benign parenthood. She seemed to lack the internal resources on which to draw to help her to function as a parent for her own children. Her way of functioning as a parent was to be in projective identification with a parental figure: to get into the shoes of a parental figure and to play daddy or mummy. The father figure in her internal world seemed to be damaged, helpless, and quite sadistic. Accordingly, when she functioned as a "father" she seems to be authoritarian, harsh, punitive and teasing. She seemed to be unable to give Karen a real experience of a combined object, experience based on introjective identification (Klein, 1955). This state of affairs is perhaps best illustrated in Tina's words "that she did not breast-feed Karen because she was not well-nourished herself" (Observation 4, p. 96). Emotionally this also seemed to be true.

Mother's inability to think about the emotional events that were taking place led her to deny that anything was happening. This created in the observations that followed a painful feeling of depression and a total rejection of Karen by Mother. When I came to the observations, I found both Mother and Karen in what felt to me as a state of apathy, neither of them willing to do anything. In the observations there were long periods of time during which nothing happened except for sitting and drinking. For example, in Observation 11, 4.12.87, pp. 108-112: " ... they went to the kitchen to make tea ... they came back with the drinks and Karen initiated a long discussion as to whether I had milk and sugar in my tea ... Karen finished her tea and went to the kitchen ... Mother said that she wanted Martin's family to know about Karen's existence [at that point Karen came

back, sat on the sofa, reciting the alphabet]. ... It was not his fault that she became pregnant ... she thought of having an abortion ... she had thought of giving Karen up for adoption ... Mother sat silently in her armchair while Karen coloured in the book. I felt painfully depressed ... Karen wanted to climb on Mother, asking for a cuddle. Mother told her she must draw on the floor. ... Karen started counting ... asking Mother about the different objects. Mother sat silent, not reacting ... Karen sat silently on Mother's lap ... Mother yawned, almost falling asleep. I became more and more depressed".

It seemed that by counting and spelling Karen was trying desperately to initiate some response from Mother, but even that failed, and she had no response. I experienced Karen as lost in space - staring motionlessly, looking for someone to hold on to, to belong to, but she did not get it. Mother was completely in her own space; she did not want to cuddle Karen or to encourage her in any way. Karen was dropped and there seemed to be a breakdown in their relationship. I felt that it was impossible to fill in the spaces, to give them shape and content, and therefore the whole atmosphere was one of apathy and confusion. Tina was falling asleep, depressed, and Karen was in a state of an object that floated around. Perhaps Karen felt she could still be somebody for me by giving me the tea with or without sugar. It seemed that Karen was too much for Mother, an extra child that should have been 'aborted or given up for adoption'. Motherhood for Tina seems to be a burden; she has no internal resources on which to draw.

#### 6.24 Karen as "an independent, competent little girl"

As observations proceeded, the depression, the apathy and the emotional pain that I experienced in the counter-transference gradually disappeared. Karen competently constructing puzzles over and over again (usually the same four or five puzzles), became the main activity in the observations, at times taking up the whole 50 minutes of the observation. Karen now appeared to be a competent little girl, and doing puzzles seemed to be an activity to pass the time competently. This new state of affairs is perhaps best demonstrated by Observation 15, 15.1.88, pp. 113-116: "Tina told me, 'Karen is really independent now. She does not follow me all the time and plays with other children ...

there are no sleeping problems any more, she goes to her room at 6.30 and she wants to go to sleep' ... Karen went and touched the puzzles ... Mother said to Karen, 'You are independent now' ... Karen said 'no'... Karen got a doll and started playing ... Mother jokingly told me she had chosen easy names for Karen's three new dolls so that there would be no problem about remembering them ... Karen hit her head and started crying ... Mother comforted her, hugging and stroking her and while doing so she looked at me, smiling ... Karen moved to the table and until the end of the observation continuously constructed the four small puzzles that were there".

This is a sequence of "independence" and "competence". Karen was independent, not because she had the internal resources to enable her to be independent but because it was more acceptable to Mother and that was what she was expected to do. Perhaps Karen's ambiguity about it manifested itself when she said 'no' to being independent. Karen's new image as a normal girl who was independent, who did not have sleeping problems and who was able to occupy herself, seems to be her way to flatten herself, probably in reaction to Mother's inability to contain and process painful feelings.

From that time onwards until the end of the period of observations, Tina's main efforts, (in which Karen played her role), were to appear to be a competent mother, and that was the way she presented herself to me and to other visitors who were there. (Observation 15, Observation 22). Karen became a competent little girl who conformed and did things which were expected to be done, but she was not herself, at least not when it came to an interaction in which Mother was involved. This is well demonstrated by the names that Mother chose for the new dolls (Observation 15). The names were not something which had some meaning but names that can be remembered easily. There was no sense of the texture of the child experience, a situation in which Karen invested meaning of herself in the dolls, expressed in the names she chose. This was the situation not only with Karen's play, but with the rest of the Mother-Karen relationship as well. Even when Mother was comforting Karen when she hurt herself and was crying, it felt to me like a mechanical procedure. There was no sympathy or life in it, but a "technical procedure" of a

"competent mother". Thus, when Tina comforted Karen she smiled at me or at other people in the room (Observation 15).

The model in Tina's mind as it emerged seemed to be: "Children of competent mothers are independent. Independence means getting on with things without making a fuss". The aim in life seemed to be "to manage" - perhaps an unavoidable result considering the unfortunate circumstances of Tina's life.

#### 6.25 The attack on Karen's thinking and on her link with the observer

As their relationship was being flattened out by both Mother and Karen, observations became boring, a difficult situation to observe and to remember. Nevertheless, at that stage it seemed that my presence there as an observer enabled Karen to establish some rapport in her mind with a reflecting object, which enabled her to think in order to elucidate some meaning. In her relationship with me, it appeared that Karen was struggling to grow up, to separate from Mother and to become a person in her own right. This seemed to be in contrast to her relationship with Mother. Tina was happy with the new development, where Karen was independent and competent and she expected no further development from that point. As soon as Karen exceeded the bounds of Mother's concept of independence she was attacked by her. Tina constantly attacked the thinking part of Karen, probably as she unconsciously realised that it evoked the pain due to separation, which she tried to avoid. When the pain emerged nevertheless, she appeared to dump it on Karen, refusing to take any responsibility in negotiating the burdensome feelings of separation.

On another level, the thinking part of Karen made her different from Tina. It enabled Karen to form an alternative link with me. It seemed that Tina could not bear that part of Karen as Tina was in projective identification with the depriving figures in her mind and therefore had to deprive Karen of that experience. (This is in accordance with my feeling throughout the period of observations that Tina was intentionally depriving her children; she did not allow Dora and Kevin to see their father, partly because she 'did not want Karen to feel different'. On one occasion she told me that she did not allow Dora to go

on a school trip, even though the teacher managed to get the money to pay for Dora's trip, saying that 'she did not go on school trips either'.) These aspects of Mother-Karen relationship are best demonstrated by Observation 18, 5.2.88, pp. 119-123: "Mother picked up a soft toy, Dandy, and threw it at Karen saying that if she puts it on the floor again then ... Karen brought Dandy to me, saying 'this is Dandy' and showed it to me ... she came from the toilet and as soon as she entered the room she asked, 'where is Yaron's cup?'".

Dandy seemed to represent a part of Karen's self that Mother did not want to distinguish, a part of Karen which was constantly criticised by Mother and was always dropped on the floor in the wrong places. It seemed that at that stage Karen already felt that I focused my thinking on the things inside, on the part of herself which was thinking, trying to elucidate meaning. She sensed that that part was important to me and that I referred to it in my mind. When she had brought Dandy back into the room to show it to me and then left it on the table until the end of the observation, she was creating with me a link, alternative to the one she had with Mother. This seemed to trigger Tina's attack. She turned off the sound of the TV, probably in order for me to hear, and so that Karen would give me her attention. Still, she gave no explanation for her restriction and it became meaningless. In the conversation that followed, Karen said clearly that she wanted to listen to the TV, but Mother told Karen that she did not: 'you want to chat'. The message seemed to be: 'You want to chat to Yaron because I want you to'. 'You are a big chatterer and you will not listen anyway'. That seemed to mean: 'but anyway you talk too much and you don't listen, so don't speak to Yaron at all'.

Thus Mother was making a multiple and contradictory injunction and it was little surprise that Karen then withdrew, sitting on the sofa, and I felt she was lost. The problem she was facing was how to retain a sense of herself when she was constantly pulled in opposite directions. She then turned to the colouring book, claiming that she had done the perfect drawing that actually had been done by Dora. She then wrote L, and E, the letters that constituted the second half of her name. It seemed that as she had just been squashed by Mother she was trying to claim: "I still have some value", perhaps trying to

prove that she could add up something, that she was progressing and could almost write her name. At that point I suddenly remembered that she had written the first half of her name in the observation the week before.

If one considers my association as a counter-transference reaction, then linking the two observations was perhaps a means of holding herself together, in order to create a sense of continuity with me. The feeling of continuity helped her to have some sense of identity and completion that had been damaged by Mother's attack. She finished writing and put the pencils by the pencil case. At that point Mother was creating the next confusion injunction: 'I take it that you have finished using the pencils?' Karen: 'yes'. Mother: 'But you didn't put them back ...' Karen: 'no'. Mother: 'you didn't put them back because you didn't want to?' Karen: 'yes'. At that point one was left with some confusion as to what Karen's 'yes' related to. Then Tina put the pencils in the case and again one was left wondering about the purpose of that sequence if that was its ending. At best it seemed like a set of rhetorical questions that had no function except to elicit some answers (an attitude well known in harsh regimes like military camps and prisons).

When Karen was standing by the table preoccupied with the paper rack and the cards, she seemed to be in a dream-like state. It was not at all clear that she wanted to play cards. Then Tina took all the cards out of the paper rack, piled them up and handed the pile to Karen. It seemed that the meaning of that act was "now I want you to play cards with me" or "now you want to play cards?". Karen started dealing the cards but then Mother said: 'I see that you want to play cards with me but I don't want to play'. At that point there was an exchange of 'yes' 'no' that ended when Mother stressed that she did not want to play, but the next minute she moved to the floor to play cards with Karen. Mother was creating the situation in which the paradox was going to be performed, then she said "no" but played after all. Karen was just following orders and said "yes" and "no".

It seemed that unconsciously Karen perceived what Mother was doing to her and she felt aggressive towards Mother. That aggression she expressed with the toys she had taken out of the plastic bag, playing with them as if they were weapons. The giraffe that

almost fondled Mother's knee but then mysteriously fell to the floor before it actually happened seemed to be an oral sadistic execution of Mother. Those attacks she had done in her mind made Karen feel guilty as she loved Mother after all and she wanted to make reparation (Klein, 1940). She wanted Mother to kiss the dolls, perhaps as reassurance that Mother was able to survive her aggression. It seems that she wanted Mother to say something like "I understand your anger, and it's all right". As Karen didn't get the response she wanted from Mother, it evoked anxiety and she climbed on Mother's lap and sat there. In all the interaction between them at that point, "who will kiss the doll and where", Mother was absolutely refusing to take part in the negotiation of those hard and painful feelings. All the responsibility was on Karen and she had to do it herself on her own. This was too difficult a task for Karen and not surprisingly she ended up sitting on Mother's lap with glazed eyes, smiling. This was in sharp contrast to the painful sequence before it and I was left with bizarre feelings, perhaps a reflection of how lost and disintegrated Karen felt.

When Karen dropped the doll that Mother added, it was perhaps an expression of her anger towards Mother for feeling dropped, unsupported by Mother in that task. Tina perceived that as an attack on her, she dropped Karen, laying her down on the floor, and they both laughed. It appeared that emotionally, Mother was dropping Karen by refusing to take any emotional responsibility for the events. She was unable to respond to Karen's need to improve the situation by making reparation; this had to be performed by Karen alone.

It seemed that the enactment of the dropped and damaged doll evoked Karen's anxiety and as a result she went to the toilet. When she came back she asked "Where is Yaron's cup?", probably in order to make a link that could enable her to find meaning. The cup represented me, someone who was interested in the events that took place inside, in her mind, and in her as a whole person, including her struggles to grow up.

Retaining and integrating the thinking part of Karen's self seemed an almost impossible task under those circumstances. The result was that in the observations one experienced her as trapped, getting lost between two worlds (Observation 18). This is as far as Karen



can go under these circumstances. As Mother's attacks became gradually more sadistic, directed towards that part of Karen that was thinking and made her different from Mother, one wondered whether Karen would be able to retain it and for how long, especially as I was about to stop the weekly observations and to start coming once a month.

#### 6.25 The escalation to a sadistic ceremony of degradation

In the following weeks, observations took the quality of a sadistic ceremony of degradation similar to the process, in harsh military regimes, that new recruits meet on their arrival. A ceremony in which one is stripped of human dignity and individuality, a ceremony that consisted of disintegration and humiliation of Karen. This perhaps is best represented by Observation 22, (4.3.88, pp. 126-130): "Karen was crying and did not stop when she saw me ... Mother said to Karen, 'Go and tell Sara ... I'm not going to do it for you'. This made Karen cry even more ... Mother just kept repeating the same sentence ... Mother repeated the sentence and Karen whispered the "right" answers in the "right" places ... Karen started whispering the number following Mother ... Karen was sitting with a constant smile on her face ... the only difference between crying and smiling was the absence of tears ... Karen held the bag, once in a while taking some coins out and then returning them to the bag".

From the beginning of the observation I experienced Mother as a sadistic, punitive educator, teaching Karen to "speak for herself". Karen was crying but Mother kept "striking" her with her words. When Karen asked Mother for a cuddle she probably wanted it in order to stay integrated, to avoid falling to pieces. Mother quoted statements that Karen was expected to repeat or to say "yes" or "no" in the right places. When that process had been completed successfully Mother gave Karen the order to count the coins. Karen was sitting on Mother's lap, holding the bag of coins, with a constant smile on her face. I felt and noticed that there was no difference in her expression between crying and smiling, probably because there was no emotion behind Karen's smile. The smiles were disconnected from any internal state. She kept on

dropping her coins throughout the observation, perhaps because she found it impossible to keep her objects together, a state of disintegration as a result of that ceremony.

### 6.27 Summary

It would seem that the absence in the family of depressive capability made it almost impossible for Karen and Mother to think about their emotional pain in order to process it rather than to project it. As a result, the growth and development of both Mother and Karen was impaired. Throughout the period of observations they both seemed to repeat the same or similar situations over and over again.

From the psychoanalytic perspective one could summarise the factors as follows:—

- (1) The mother's identification with sadistic parental figures when functioning as a parent.
- (2) The damaged parental couple object in the mother's mind.
- (3) The absence of a third figure, an adult, to whom both mother and child could turn for the facilitation of separation.

Considering the social perspective we can say:—

- (4) Obviously the mother was depressed. Financial hardship was pervasively evident and the mother was not qualified for any rewarding employment.
- (5) She was lonely, without support from family, partner or friends. It seems unavoidable that she would often experience motherhood as an unbearable burden and discharge her negative feelings onto the children.
- (6) One has the impression of a history of generations of material and social deprivation.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**LILY**

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### **LILY**

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## **7.1 RESULTS : LILY**

### **7.11. The initial contact and family background**

I was put in touch with Christina through the staff at her children's nursery, whose help I asked in finding a family for the purpose of my research. A week later the teacher at Lily's nursery phoned me and said that she had spoken to Christina who at first did not want to have an observer going to her house but then had changed her mind and said that she would like to meet the observer first and then make up her mind. She gave me Christina's telephone number and said she was expecting my call. When I phoned Christina she told that me she had heard from Lily's teacher about my research and said that before giving me her answer about allowing me to observe, she wanted to meet me first. She suggested we meet in the nursery at the end of the day on the following Tuesday.

When I arrived Christina had not yet come and Lily's teacher joked that Christina was a little anxious hence she wanted to meet me somewhere she would feel safe and not at her flat.

Christina came soon after and the teacher introduced us to each other and then said she would go and do other things and leave us to "continue with your business".

Christina said that there were a few things she wanted to know before she gave me her answer. She said she had heard from the teacher that I was engaged in research on single mothers' babies and that she understood that I wanted to observe Lily in order to compare children from two-parent families with children of single mothers. I agreed that this was so and she said that the only thing she was worried about was whether I would start asking "all kinds of questions" to do with her private life. She went on to tell me that one of her neighbours had someone visiting who did just that and she had found it a very unpleasant experience. I told Christina that I would not ask anything that would be experienced by her as intrusive. I said that I would observe whatever is there and that I did not expect her to do anything she didn't normally do. I said that if she felt that she

wants to tell me things about Lily or about any other subject, I would be glad to listen, but that I would not ask questions which she might find intrusive. Christina said that in that case she would have no problem in my coming as an observer. She told me she had discussed it with her husband. She asked when I would like to start observing and we decided that I would go the following Tuesday and every Tuesday after at 12.15 for six months.

I asked Christina whether there was anything she wanted to know about me. She said she had heard from the teacher that I was a child psychologist. She wanted to know whether I was German as she thought my accent sounded German or French. I told her that I was Israeli and Christina said she wondered about my accent as it reminded her of her mother who is German. Christina said she had also heard from the teacher that I was looking for an Indian family to observe, and offered to help by asking one of her Indian neighbours on the estate whether they would agree to my going there to observe. I thanked her but told her that I had already found an Indian family.

Christina suggested that she introduce me to Luke and Lily and we went to the other room where the children were playing together in the sandpit. Mother told both children: "This is the gentleman ..." she had told them might come to observe Lily at home. Lily smiled at me and said "Hello". Luke looked at me silently, saying nothing, as if he were studying me.

We agreed that the following Tuesday I would come again to the nursery where I would meet them and walk home with them, as Christina thought it would be too complicated for me to find their address on such a big estate.

Christina is a tall, grossly over weight, 24 year old woman. She has short curly blond hair, blue eyes and beautiful facial features. In spite of her size she moves quickly and gracefully. She married John when she was 17 years old. John is in his early thirties. He is of medium height, has brownish hair, blue eyes and, in spite of the tattoo on his arm, his appearance has a somewhat feminine quality to it. He was a divorcee at the time he had met Christina and had a one and a half year old baby boy - David, from his first marriage.

John had custody of David since the divorce, with supervised access to the mother, due to her having physically abused the boy in the past.

Christina is the eldest of three children. Her father had left the family when she was six years old and, although she knows where he lives, she has hardly seen him since he left. Her mother remarried when Christina was eleven years old and she does think of her step-father as a natural father.

Christina and John have two children from their marriage: Luke who is five years old and Lily, who is three years old.

Lily is a solid, overweight little girl. She has short blond hair, blue eyes and pale skin. She speaks tersely and comes across as somewhat bold and cheeky. Luke is a heavily built, slightly overweight five year old boy. He has short, brownish hair, blue eyes and a rather large head. He comes across as slow and casual but thoughtful.

The family lives on a large post-war council estate in North London. As one approaches their flat in a second-floor block of flats, one crosses a run-down, neglected environment with broken bottles, dirt, and some wrecked and burnt cars. There is graffiti on walls all over the estate, many of which having political content such as 'Thatcher - Fascist Pig', as if time here has not moved since the resignation of Margaret Thatcher two years ago, and her ghost still hovers above the estate. In front of their block there is an area which originally was designated as a playground, and there are rusty chains from an old swing and the remains of some other swings sticking out of the asphalt. When I came to the staircase I was hit by a smell which is a mixture of urine and the disinfectant with which the stairs are washed daily in the morning. In fact there are little depressions in the stairs in which this liquid is ever present as a reminder that, in spite of the over all feeling of neglect and hopelessness, the place is well maintained by a caretaker who washes the stairs every morning.

The family flat consists of two small bedrooms and a small kitchen which has a passage leading to the living room. In the living room there is a sofa, two armchairs, a T.V. and coffee table which at times is located in front of the sofa and at other times alongside the wall. The T.V. creates the "gravity centre" of the living room and the sofa as well as the



armchairs all face the large screen. There are no pictures on the wall and the room is bare except for some shelves on which there are some video cassettes and a few copper and china ornaments along the window sill.

The two boys share a room which is filled up by a large bunk-bed, leaving very little space in the room for play. On the wall at the end of the bed there are shelves that almost touch the bed. The shelves are laden with toys. The parents share their bedroom with Lily. The space of the room is filled with a double bed which has a wooden head support, Lily's single bed along another wall, and a large cupboard inside which the clothes of the whole family are kept. Both rooms give one a feel of claustrophobia.

John collects unemployment benefit and drives a mini-cab as an extra, unofficial income. In the past he was a bus driver. During the six months of observation he was often at home and when he was there he would mainly watch the T.V.

Christina looks after the family. She did not work in the past. John's extended family live nearby and help Christina and John with the children whenever they need it.

From my first contact with Christina she was always very friendly, always welcomed me when I came for the observations. Throughout the period of the observations I felt that I was a desirable guest in the family. Often I had the thought that Christina had agreed to accept me as an observer simply because she wanted to help me.

Although verbal communication is not a dominant feature of the family's culture and in fact hardly takes place, Christina always engaged me in conversation with her, before and between watching T.V. The subject of this small talk was usually the price of things and events that took place in the family's life and on the estate. These were the central pre-occupation of Christina as well as of John, and their curiosity had hardly ever extended beyond the boundaries of the estate. In a somewhat contradictory way, I usually felt that Christina was sincerely interested in talking to me before finally returning to the T.V., as if it was a magical, magnetic object which she could not resist.

During observations when John was at home, he usually sat passively watching T.V. with Christina. He was always friendly towards me, asking me how I was. Unlike Christina, with John I was always the one to initiate the conversation.

In all the observations I had to make a conscious effort to focus my attention on Lily and not to be drowned by the T.V. and my greater interest in Mother. Often I experienced Lily in the counter-transference feelings as a boring, stupid little girl who interrupted my conversations with Christina.

It was only when the interpretations to the observations were written that I could see that Lily had made a strong contact with me. She therefore probably found it difficult to separate from me at the end of the observations and turned the separations into a non-existing event when she very often avoided saying hello and goodbye. Lily's mode of relating was very terse and her language almost telegraphic, always consisting of a one-word sentence. It seems that her communication had never developed beyond the minimum level of the parents with whom she identified.

The family has a friendly black female Labrador dog. The dog was always treated with love and care by all the members of the family, especially the parents. It was always present in the living room with one of the parents stroking the dog as they watched T.V. At times it appeared as if the dog received a greater share of love than any other member of the family.

Lily was three years and one month old when I started the observations.

#### 7.12.A summary of a sample of observations:

The following is a summary of a sample of observations:

##### Observation 5 - 26.11.91

When I arrived I saw that the front door was open. The dog came out to welcome me, barking, and Christina came to the door.

Christina led the way to the living room and sat in her armchair by the window. The T.V. was on and Lily and Luke were sitting on the sofa, each of them leaning on the arm support and touching each other's feet. Lily's trousers were down to her knees.

I said hello and they both returned my greeting. I sat on my armchair in the corner. Mother asked the children if they knew me. Lily said she did not, smiling as she spoke.

Luke said he did not know me. Mother said, "You are playing up", and told me that they had remembered that I was coming. Lily said, "This is the man who came to see me at the nursery". Mother said that was right and asked Lily if she remembered my name. Lily said, "Yaron". The dog came to me and jumped on me and sat on my lap. Lily wrapped a ribbon around her finger and for a while touched it with the fingers of the other hand, concentrating on feeling it. She went to Mother, telling her she had a sore finger. Then she came to me, repeating it, showing me her finger. Still standing next to me, Lily told me that it was a bandage. Mother said that it was as well that I had been unable to come the previous week as they had all been ill and the children returned to the nursery only yesterday. Lily went to Mother and, pointing at the ribbon on her finger, told her it was a bandage. Mother replied that she had already seen it and looked at the T.V. as she changed channels. Lily went to sit on the sofa as before. Luke and Lily sat feet to feet and started pushing each other with their feet. Lily at some point raised her foot and kicked Luke. Luke kicked her back and she started to cry. Whilst crying, she kicked Luke again and he kicked her back. Mother had been watching T.V. until then, told Luke to stop it. Luke and Mother went on watching T.V. Lily took the ribbon off her finger and put one end of it in her mouth. Mother told her to be careful and not to choke herself. Luke stood up and took a hair ribbon from the coffee table. He sat upright on the sofa and dangled the ribbon in front of Lily's face saying "catch it". When Lily tried to catch it Luke quickly moved it away. It developed into a game which they played for two or three minutes. At some point Luke stood up and said "catch me" as he ran to the far side of the coffee table. Lily stood up and it became a chasing game - Lily chased Luke and they ran around the coffee table. As they played, Mother offered me a cup of tea and went to the kitchen to make it. The children continued to play the chasing game for another three or four minutes, and then Lily came to my armchair, climbed on the arm, and then suddenly jumped on my back, hugging me from behind, laughing as she refused to let go of my neck. Luke watched her for a few seconds and then joined her, hugging my arm and refusing to let go of it. Christina shouted at them from the kitchen to stop it. Luke released my arm and went to sit on the sofa but Lily hugged my neck roughly and

laughed. Mother came and took Lily off my neck and stood her on the floor. Lily went to the space between the back of the armchair and the wall. Mother went to sit in her armchair, watching TV. Luke picked up the ribbon which was on the sofa and tried to wrap it around the dog's nose. Lily, who was behind my armchair, started throwing Mother's shoes that were there on to Mother. Luke picked up a pair of Mother's shoes that Lily had thrown, put them on, and started walking around the living room in them. Mother told him to take them off immediately and he did so. He went back to sit on the sofa, watching T.V. Lily came out from behind the armchair and put on a pair of Mother's shoes and started walking around the living room. Mother told her to be careful not to fall and to break her neck. Luke went out of the living room and Lily immediately followed him. She came back after a minute holding a pair of purple shoes. She brought them to me, telling me they were Luke's shoes. She sat on the floor next to me and put the shoes on. She took the laces out from both shoes. She then sat on the floor for six or seven minutes trying to put the laces back into their holes but didn't manage it. I felt I had to struggle to concentrate on watching Lily rather than watching T.V. Lily left the shoes next to me and went to Mother. She climbed onto Mother's lap, sat there, and they watched T.V. together (*Home and Away*). After two or three minutes Luke went and sat on the sofa and watched T.V. Lily started to sing "Baa Baa Black Sheep" and Luke joined her. Luke said that he wanted to sit on Mother's lap too and she invited him to join them. Luke went to Mother and sat on her right knee, Lily sitting on the left one. Lily tried to stand on Mother's lap. Mother told her no "to play silly" and put her on the floor. Lily stood between Mother and the window sill. Lily started playing with some copper ornaments that were on the window sill - a mug, a toilet, a bath, two figures of people and three bears. She moved them around and spoke to them, but it was difficult to follow what she was doing as she had her back to me. While Lily played Luke went to the toilet. When the film had finished Christina told me that Lily has an imaginary friend. She said that during breakfast time Lily had said that she was feeding her friend. Christina said that she had heard about such things but Luke and David did not have imaginary friends.

It was time to stop. I said goodbye to Lily who continued playing, taking no notice of me as I said goodbye and went away. Mother followed me to the door.

### Observation 7 - 10.12.91

Lily opened the door and the dog bounded up to me, barking and jumping up at me in a friendly way. Lily, smiling, said hello. Luke also came to the door, looked at me, but did not respond when I greeted him, and he went to his room. I saw Christina sitting in the living room and I went in. The T.V. was on. On the way to the living room Lily said to me, "I am not playing with you". I said hello to Christina and sat in "my" armchair. Mother asked Lily what she had said to me. Lily repeated: "I am not playing with you". Lily sat next to Mother, on her right side, and watched T.V. Luke came into the room. He went to the coffee table on my left and pushed a lorry which was on it, driving it around. After a while he put a Lego figure of a girl on the back of the lorry and went on driving it for a minute or two. He picked up a hair ribbon which he found lying on the floor and put it on the wheels on the right hand side of the lorry, trying to drive it with the ribbon on the wheels. Meanwhile both Lily and Mother were watching TV. Lily picked up a hair clip and sucked one end of it, smiling at me as she lay her face on Mother's lap. They both watched T.V. for four or five minutes. Luke continued to drive his lorry, making sounds of a lorry. Mother, unexpectedly, asked Lily why she had told me that she would not play with me. Lily did not respond and Mother repeated the question. Lily ran over to me, hugged me and returned to the sofa, sat on it, and watched T.V. Christina told me that John had started to do minicab driving and he was therefore not at home.

Lily left the room and returned after a minute holding a hair brush. She leaned on Mother, brushing her own hair and holding the hair clip in her other hand. Luke drove his lorry under the coffee table, lying on the floor as he drove it. Lily went to the bathroom, saying she wanted to wet the brush with water. She came back and sat as previously, brushing her hair. After two or three minutes Mother said to Lily: "What did

you do at nursery today?". Lily said, "Picture". They both watched T.V. for a while. Lily said she was going to the toilet and left the room. As she went, Luke stood up and came to me. He leaned on my lap and asked me what had happened to my hair. I felt that he was worried. He told me that he loved eating pizza and he loved eating bacon for breakfast. He asked me if I liked pizza and bacon as well. I said that I did and he said I was like him. Mother told me jokingly that Luke hated chicken breast. Luke said that was not true, it was his favourite food. Mother laughed and agreed. Luke went out of the living room. Mother watched T.V. After two or three minutes, Lily returned, holding a shopping catalogue with pictures. She lay on her front on the floor close to the T.V. and looked intently at the pictures as she turned over the pages. Luke came back holding a bottle of red nail varnish. Mother quickly stood up and took the bottle away from him. Luke stared at her for a few seconds and then watched T.V., standing next to Lily. I felt that he was hurt and lost and his state evoked pain in me.

After a while Lily, who was looking at the catalogue, said, "Snowman". Mother asked Luke what he wanted as a Christmas present, smiling at me as she enquired. Luke said that he wanted the Hoover. Mother said, "I see that you have not changed your mind yet". Lily said that she wanted a toy. Mother asked her which one but Lily only repeated that she wanted a toy. Mother asked her again but Lily repeated that she wanted a toy. Lily went to her room and came back with a pencil. She lay on the floor as before, scribbling on the catalogue, page after page. Luke went to his room. Christina watched T.V. Lily scribbled on the catalogue for nine or ten minutes. Lily said, "Father Christmas" and went on scribbling. After a while she came across a picture of different sweets and said that she wanted sweets. Mother said it was bad for her teeth. Lily took off her shoes. She put her feet on the catalogue and drew around them, repeating this four or five times. Lily then scrawled on the floor and lay on her front, close to the T.V. She watched T.V. for a short while, then started laughing and speaking gibberish, as if she were a young baby. Mother didn't say anything and went on watching T.V. Lily rolled on the floor until she reached Mother's legs. She lay there watching T.V.

It was time to stop. I told Christina not to come to the front door or disturb herself as she wanted to watch T.V. Lily did not respond when I said goodbye and left.

#### Observation 14 - 28.1.92

When I arrived there was no-one at home. I waited in my car from where I could see the flat, and after twenty minutes Christina arrived with Lily. I waited for two or three minutes and then went up to the flat. Christina opened the front door and was very apologetic for arriving late. She said that they had gone to Luke's school to see whether he was alright as he had not been very well that morning.

Christina invited me into the kitchen where Lily was sitting in her place at the head of the table, eating yogurt. I said hello to Lily but she looked at me, not answering. I said hello again but Lily took a spoonful of yogurt, again looking at me but not saying a word. Mother, who had meanwhile started to wash the dishes, turned to Lily saying, "Say hello to Yaron" but Lily just looked at her, not saying a word, semi-smiling as she moved her head a bit to the left. Mother said, "What's the matter with you, why don't you say hello to Yaron?" Lily smiled and said softly, "Because I don't want to". Mother told Lily loudly not to be cheeky, otherwise she would smack her, and demanded that Lily say hello to me. Meanwhile I sat at the other side of the table and said to Christina that it was alright and that Lily would probably say hello to me later on.

Mother turned back to the sink and went on washing the dishes. She started telling me that Luke really enjoyed his new school and had got used to it very quickly. She said that it was actually Lily who had had the crisis; since Luke had left the Nursery Lily does not move away from Mother, does not want to go to nursery and cried when Mother left her there in the morning.

Meanwhile Lily ate her yogurt, staring at me at times but not saying a word. I had the feeling that Lily was spiteful rather than sad. She finished her yogurt and wanted a second one. Mother stopped washing the dishes and brought her one. Lily sat as before, eating her second yogurt. Mother offered me a cup of tea and started to make it,

talking of the construction job at the entrance to the estate. Lily, who had eaten a few spoonfuls from the second yogurt, went to the rubbish bin and threw the yogurt into it. Mother, who was making the tea, noticed what she had done and shouted at her, telling her she would not get anything to eat until Luke came home. Lily didn't answer and went back to sit at the table. She looked at Mother and then took a pen and a piece of paper and scribbled what she said was a fish, and then, as she continued to scribble, said it was a star.

Mother finished making the tea and invited me to sit in the living room. She gave me my mug and went and sat on the sofa next to the dog. I went and sat in my usual armchair. The T.V. was on and Mother said that *Home and Away* was about to begin. She told Lily to come to the living room but Lily said she did not want to come and remained at the table. As Mother was watching the programme Lily came and sat on Mother's lap, leaning her face on her chest and Mother hugged her. They sat like that for two or three minutes watching the programme.

Then, Lily got down and walked over to me. She climbed on the arm of the armchair and then stood behind me hugging my neck and leaning her face on my head. She giggled as she stood like this. I did not respond for a few seconds and Mother smiled, asking Lily "What are you doing to Yaron?" Lily placed her cheek against my cheek, pressing against it. Mother smiled, saying "Poor Yaron, what are you doing to him". I waited for a few seconds and then turned to Lily, lifted her in the air, and stood her on the floor. Again she climbed up behind me but I lifted her and stood her on the floor. Lily said to me, "Come and see me jump" and went to the parents' bedroom/her bedroom and climbed on the parents' bed. She climbed onto the head support and then jumped down onto the mattress, falling and laughing. She repeated the whole sequence a few times and I felt it had a manic quality to it. I felt that standing there, watching her, I was colluding with her in something exciting. I decided to go back to the living room, telling her that I was going back there. I sat in "my" armchair. Mother was watching a programme.

After two or three minutes Lily came back to the living room. She climbed onto Mother's lap and they sat together watching the film for a few minutes. Then Lily got down and



went to the kitchen. After a minute she returned with two empty yogurt containers and sat on the armchair by the window. She knocked the containers together and said she was playing music with them. She did this for two or three minutes then stood up and said she was going to the toilet. She came back after a few minutes and sat on the floor next to Mother's feet and watched the film for a few seconds. She then crawled on the floor until she reached me. She looked at me, smiled, and then crawled under the coffee table on my left. After a few seconds she emerged and told me that she had new pants. Still lying on the floor next to my legs, she put one leg on my foot, smiling at me. As I felt that this touching was exciting for Lily I withdrew my foot. She stood up and went to sit next to Mother on the sofa. Together they watched T.V. After a minute or two Lily picked up Mother's coffee cup which was on the floor and drank from it. She stood up and said she wanted to change her trousers and went to her room. It was time to stop.

#### Observation 20 - 11.3.92

As I got out of my car I noticed John standing at the front door of the flat, waving to me. I waved back at him. When I arrived at the flat the front door was open and Lily was standing there, saying "Come in". When I went in the dog bounded up to me, barking and welcoming me. Lily kept on saying "Come in" until I reached the living room. Mother, who was sitting in the armchair, laughed when she heard Lily saying it and she asked her, "What did you say to Yaron?". Lily did not answer. John was in the living room, sitting in the other armchair, and I sat on the sofa. The dog came and sat on my lap. Lily came to me, tried to sit herself on my lap next to the dog, and hugged my neck with both hands. She smiled at me as she did. Mother and Father laughed as they watched her. I felt it had a sexual component to it. I gently tried to take her hands off my neck but she held on tightly. I asked her if she was saying "hello" to me in this way and she said she was. Mother asked her if she was giving me a cuddle but Lily did not respond. After a few seconds Lily let go of my neck and went to the boys' room. She stayed there for fifteen or twenty minutes before she returned to the living room.

Meanwhile, John was telling me that he had stopped driving his minicab as there was no money in it. He said that he had been to the Job Centre but there were no jobs paying a worthwhile wage. However, if there was no change the following week he would take any job offered to him. He then described the different jobs. Lily came back with the dog's lead. She connected the lead to the dog's collar. The dog was still sitting on my lap. She said that she wanted to take the dog to the kitchen and pulled him to the floor, but from there the dog refused to move.

John called the dog, who went over to him. He stroked the dog. Lily, still holding the lead, sat on Father's lap. Father caressed her and asked her what she had been doing at nursery. Lily did not respond. Then the dog started to bark at Father and Lily as if he was jealous. Father took the lead off and the dog ran over to me and jumped up onto my lap. Father took the dog's lead and attached it to Lily's shirt. She laughed as he did it. Then Father called the dog which came over to him and Father attached the end of the lead to the dog and told him to pull. Lily started to cry and I felt her feelings were hurt. Mother told John to stop it before Lily screamed. Father released the lead from Lily's shirt and from the dog's collar. Lily got off Father's lap and sat on the floor by his feet. She took the lead and made several knots, concentrating on this activity. Lily stood up, waved the lead above her head for a few seconds, and then went to the kitchen. She came back and said that she was looking for the bag with her wet trousers in it. Turning to me, she said that she had wet her trousers at nursery and she had not managed to take them off in the toilet. She went back to the kitchen and after a minute returned with the trousers. When she brought the trousers to me Mother told her that Yaron was not interested in her wet trousers. Lily went back to the kitchen and after a minute returned holding a chain made of pasta. She took it to Mother, asking her to tie it to make a necklace but Mother, who was watching T.V., said it was impossible to do that. Lily took it to Father with the same request. Father looked at it but agreed that it was impossible to tie it. Lily brought the pasta and sat on the sofa next to me. For two or three minutes she tried to tie both ends of the chain together but could not do it. She left it on the sofa and went to the boys' room. She returned with a doll and brought it to the sofa. She sat

the doll on my coat which was on the sofa. She sat on the sofa between me and the doll. She picked up the doll and lay it on her lap. I asked her what she was doing and Lily answered: "nothing". She put the doll on the sofa and went to the boys' room, returning with a white jumper for the doll and dressed the doll in it. She sat on the sofa and held the doll in a breast-feeding position, hugging it. When I asked her what she was doing she said, "nothing". She put the pasta chain around the doll's neck and sat it on her lap facing the T.V. She watched T.V.

It was time to stop. Lily followed me to the door saying goodbye as I walked out.

### Observation 22 - 24.3.92

When I arrived I saw Lily, Luke and two other children at the front door of the flat. Lily rode her bicycle past me and said 'Hello' indifferently as she rode towards the stairs. Luke, who was standing by the door, told me he wasn't at school as he had a cough. I went into the flat and the dog welcomed me, went into the kitchen where I found a gathering of two women, one with a little girl on her lap, John and Christina. They were drinking tea and smoking. Christina introduced me to their neighbours and I stayed in the kitchen for several minutes. They were talking about organising a bus to take them to see the cup final and they were thinking about a suitable place to leave the children on that occasion.

I went outside and saw that Lily was still riding her bicycle from one end of the passage to the door, back and forth. Luke was riding his bicycle as well, and the other two children were watching them. I too watched them for about five minutes. Lily got off her bicycle and went to her room; she came out of her room carrying a carrier bag which she took into the kitchen. She sat on the floor for a little while, under the table, and emptied the carrier bag which I then discovered had about ten cars inside it. Lily looked around for a while and then picked up a car. She pushed the car on the floor for a short distance. She left the car, looked around for a few seconds and put her hand on another car. Again she looked around for a while and then pushed the car on the floor for some distance. She left that car and repeated a similar sequence with a new car. She played

this game for about ten minutes and I experienced the scene as Lily feeling lost. Then Mother noticed the cars on the floor and somewhat angrily demanded that Lily put the cars back inside the bag. Lily returned all the cars to the bag and took it to the boys' room. She then went to the toilet and stayed there for nine or ten minutes. Meanwhile the adults were talking about the bill for the elevator which they considered much too high; they considered how to deal with it.

Lily came out of the toilet. She went to the living room and put her shoes on and then went outside and rode her bicycle towards the stairs. She got off her bicycle and began to carry it down the stairs. I stood in front of her, blocking her way, and told Luke to go and ask Mother whether they were allowed to go down. I explained to Lily that she needed Mother's permission to go down. Lily did not respond and pushed me with her bicycle. As we stood there at the top of the stairs, I had the association of functioning as a low voltage electric fence which prevented the cattle from leaving the pen. Luke came back and said that they had Mother's permission to go downstairs. They both went down and I stayed upstairs, watching them. Luke rode the bicycle round and round in circles, Lily running behind him. They played like this for five minutes then Luke went upstairs and Lily rode the bicycle for a while longer.

The visitors left and Mother and Father followed them out. They stood next to me by the bannisters and watched Lily riding. Lily noticed them and waved to them and they waved back at her. Lily rode towards the swing, drove straight into it and it knocked her off the bicycle. She lay on the ground on her back not moving. Mother said to Father, "Silly cow" and started to laugh. Father began to laugh as well. They both continued to laugh for a little while. I found it distressing and I felt alarmed as Lily did not move and did not make any sound. Lily, still not moving, started to cry. Mother shouted to her to stand up but she did not move. Mother told Father angrily that it had happened a few times recently and that Lily had just pretended to be crying. Luke came out and Mother asked him to go down to see if Lily was really crying. Luke reached Lily and called from there that she really was crying. Mother went down, picked Lily up and sat her on her bicycle. Mother reported to Father: "There are no tears". Father smiled and went inside.

Lily rode the bicycle to the stairs and they all came back upstairs. As Lily approached the front door Mother asked if she had really been hurt. Lily turned to Mother saying "Yes" and then winked. Lily laughed and Mother joined in her laughter. Luke observed them with a blank expression on his face.

They went into the living room. Mother joined Father on the sofa. I sat in "my" armchair. Lily sat next to Father. Luke still stood at the door of the living room. Father stopped watching T.V. and started to play with the dog. Each time he moved his body the dog jumped in that direction, barking. Luke joined in the game, pretending that he was a dog too. Father told Luke to "Move away, you are not a dog". Luke went to sit in front of the T.V. Father finished playing with the dog and watched T.V. Luke turned it off and went over to Father. Father told him to put it back on which he did and went to his room. Lily, who had been sitting next to Father, followed Luke and joined him in his room. After a few minutes I went to observe the children. They were sitting inside a small snooker table, pushing cars, telling me it was a ship. They pushed the cars silently for three or four minutes. I went back to the living room. There was a political broadcast by the Labour Party. In reply to my question, John said that they would not vote in the election, they never had voted as anyway there was not difference between the parties and in any case he would not vote Labour as they would raise taxes.

The children came back. Luke was holding a toy squirrel. Lily came over to Father who said, "What did you do at nursery today?". Lily said, "Nothing". Father said, "Draw me a picture". Lily responded, "Don't want to". Father again said, "Draw me a picture" and then tickled Lily. Lily laughed and it turned into a game: "draw me ... don't want to ... tickle ... laughter". Luke joined in the game and he was tickled as well. Then Father stopped the game abruptly and turned to watch T.V. Mother sat in her armchair all this time, watching T.V.

Lily went to sit next to Father. Luke, who was standing in front of Father, still holding the squirrel, came over to Father and with the squirrel touched Father's face, "biting him". Father snatched the squirrel from him and threw it at the wall opposite him, saying that it was a disgusting squirrel. Luke picked up the squirrel and threw it at Father, who caught

it and threw it at the wall again, repeating that it was a disgusting squirrel. It developed into a game, Lily joining in as well, and they continued to play for a further two or three minutes until Father said it was enough and that he wanted to watch T.V. Luke went into the kitchen and Lily followed him. They crawled under the table and played there, Luke being mummy and Lily the baby.

It was time to stop. The children did not respond when I said goodbye and no-one followed me to the door.

### 7.13. Emerging patterns

As observations proceeded some pattern emerged in the structural development of the observations and Lily's response in relation to the parents.

#### 7.131. Watching T.V.

The T.V. in the living room was not only the "gravity centre" of the room but indeed of the whole family life. It stood in the corner of the living room and underneath it were: an expensive video, the equipment connecting to cable T.V. and the most recent T.V. dish which gave them a variety of 35 channels world-wide that they could watch. The T.V. was always on, and when not engaged in absolutely essential functions such as eating, the parents (and often the children also) would be watching it. Conversations took place as they watched T.V. and during advertisement breaks. Any interaction of the parents with the children and with me always ended when they returned to the T.V.

#### 7.132. Lily's attempts to link with maleness.

Throughout the period of observations it seemed that whenever Lily's interaction with Mother had failed to produce the feeling of security she wanted or the knowledge she was trying to derive, she then resorted to link herself with Luke or with me. At other times following these failures she went to the boys' room, staying there for a while, or bringing one of Luke's toys to the living room. In doing so she seemed to be trying to create an alternative link with the hope that with this new link she would have the

experience that Mother had failed to give her. Often it appeared that by moving to create these "masculine links" Lily was trying to avoid identifying with unpleasant aspects of Mother, especially stupidity. The "masculine links" often seemed to represent thought and self-care. Thus for example: Observation 5, p.10, Lily went to Luke in his room following Mother's warning not to break her neck. She came back to the living room with Luke's shoes. Similar developments can be found in many other observations: Observation 7, p.15 following Mother's questions Lily came and hugged me, Observation 20, p.39 following Mother's question, Lily went to the boys' room.

## 7.2 DISCUSSION: LILY

### 7.21 Variable Grid

Subject: Mother	Factor	Observation
Name of Child: Lily  Name of Mother: Christina  Single Mother: No	1: Loneliness	No
	2: Material deprivation	Yes – close to poverty line
	3: Low self-esteem	No
	4: Lack of emotional support	No
	5: Child replacing partner	No
	6: Signs of depression	No
	7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history	No – but immaturity and history of deprivation
	8: Supportive network of friends	Yes
	9: Educational level	Low
	10: Nationality / ethnicity	White English



## Variable Grid

Subject: Child	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Lily</p> <p>Name of Mother: Christina</p> <p>Single Mother: No</p>	1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment	Medium on pre-oedipal level; poor when in triangular situations
	2: High level of anxiety	Yes – in relation to parents' denigration projections
	3: Evidence of failure to separate	Apparent separation, but also contra-indications
	4: Problems of gender identity	No
	5: Emotional contribution of siblings	Yes – identify with older brother to avoid being denigrated. He is a companion

### 7.22. Development in the face of hopelessness.

The summary of the six month observations of Lily and her family seems to be a description of a struggle to develop in the face of hopelessness and fragmented identity. Undoubtedly the creation of this constellation involves a complicated interaction of socio-economic factors and individual psychopathology in a process of mutual shaping. Although this chapter would focus on the psychological factors, it is essential to acknowledge the other factors as the context which attributes a large part of the meaning of the phenomena observed.

It seems that the reality of living on a deteriorating Council estate in an atmosphere of dreary despair (see Results Lily, pp. 205-206) necessitates the blocking of any capacity to think in order to avoid the sense of hopelessness and its resultant depression. When the child is faced with non-thinking parents in a world in which T.V. slogans replaced thinking, the development rooted in thinking ceases to exist. The child is then left as a grotesque baby in whose internal world there are depleted relationships of impoverished figures. The summary of the six month observation of Lily and her family will trace the development of this process.

### 7.23. T.V. is all you need

It seems that the situations I observed whenever I came reflected to some extent the fixed location of the family within the society. Observations were always predictable and monotonous. Watching T.V. was a constant which was at times interrupted for necessary activities such as feeding the children, going to the toilet, and cleaning up. Verbal interaction hardly took place and the children's play appeared to be marginal, often experienced as a background "grey noise" interfering with the T.V. transmission. Within this small space, people and furniture had a fixed location and even the dog always sat on the same place on the sofa when not on John's lap or on mine.

It seems that the fixed location corresponded to the rigidity of reality which was cut off from thoughts and imagination, probably as knowledge about it was experienced as

dangerously painful. Within this setting the T.V. had a very important function. It seems that the T.V. functioned as a magnet for projections for all the family members, especially the parents, who interacted almost solely with its screen. Rather than receiving knowledge, or stimulation to thought by watching a programme, the parents seemed to constantly project their hopes, their idealised parts, their phantasies and their negative feelings into the different figures in the soap operas. These ready made figures always had one sentimental meaning with which the observers were fed, not requiring the observers to create their own ideas. The focus of their relationships seemed to be with a figure rather than with a character or an actor and thus any real element was taken away from the relationships. This type of relationship is lethal to development as it destroys the reality element and the observers operate in an omnipotent phantasy in which all their needs are magically fulfilled, obliterating any feelings of pain and frustration. A central magical instrument was the T.V. remote control, by means of which one could interact with figures from 35 different T.V. channels. But most destructive of all was the fact that all other types of interaction were blocked, suffocated soon after they emerged.

#### 7.24 Destroy your mind, you should not know

It appears that the only model for development the parents offered the children was to evacuate their minds and their feelings into the screen and to avoid thinking. Thus, the parents' communication to the children seemed to be, "Do not know, you don't have to know, destroy your apparatus for thinking". This situation is well demonstrated in Observation 5, 26.11.92, pp. 8 - 10: "... Lily wrapped a ribbon around her finger ... concentrating on feeling it with the fingers of her other hand ... she said she had a sore finger ... she told me it was a bandage ... Mother said she had already seen it and looked at the T.V. as she changed channels ... Lily and Luke sat feet to feet and started pushing each other with their feet ... They started kicking each other ... Luke and Mother watched T.V. Lily took the ribbon off her finger and put one end in her mouth. Mother told her to be careful and not to choke herself ... Luke dangled the ribbon in front of Lily's face, saying "Catch it" ... it became a chasing game ... Lily came and hugged me from behind,

laughing as she refused to let go of my neck ... Luke joined her, hugging my arm ... Luke put on a pair of Mother's shoes and walked around. Mother told him to take them off immediately ... Lily put on Mother's shoes and started walking around the room. Mother told her to be careful not to fall and break her neck. Luke went out of the living room and Lily immediately followed him. She came back holding a pair of shoes ... she told me they were Luke's shoes ... she put Luke's shoes on ... she took the laces out ... for six or seven minutes she tried to put the laces back into their holes ... she climbed onto Mother's lap and they watched T.V. together ... Luke came and sat on Mother's right knee. Lily tried to stand on Mother's knees but Mother told her not to be silly and put her on the floor ... Lily moved the copper ornaments around as she was speaking to them ... When the film was over Christina told me that Lily has an imaginary friend ... she said that she had heard about such things but Luke and David did not have imaginary friends".

It seems that the finger, with which one gathers information about the reality in the service of producing knowledge, was mutilated. One wonders whether Lily's pretend play meant something like, "In order to be a member of the family I have to mutilate my apparatus to produce knowledge". It appears that Lily was trying to make an important discrimination when she said that the ribbon was a bandage. That is, "This is a ribbon which is a concrete object in reality and now it is a bandage which is an object of phantasy in the service of exploring feelings and thoughts". It was this discrimination which she had started with the observer that she brought to Mother, showing her that it was a bandage. But Mother was busy changing channels on the T.V. and she dismissed Lily. At that point Lily resorted to her game of feet to feet with Luke. It seems that this game was a way of exploring limits: "What's inside and what's outside, what is me and what is you". The exploration of limits had turned into an aggressive link - kicking, perhaps because the attempt to develop a link of knowledge (Bion, 1962) had failed. At that point aggression became the operative link. It is important to note that the means of exploration that had been the finger earlier on, had become the feet at that stage.

When Lily put the ribbon in her mouth she seems to be trying to generate knowledge via the mouth in a way that young babies do. Following the failure to explore via the finger

and then the leg, the only way to know was via the mouth. Mother's reaction to that was, "Be careful not to choke". Unconsciously Mother's message seems to be, "If you know and will internalise this knowledge you will die". Mother then returned to her main interaction - watching T.V., and Lily then continued in her attempt to produce knowledge.

When the children were playing again with the ribbon they seem to rediscover an object capable of producing knowledge. The play consisted of making discriminations: "What is there and what is absent". Then it developed into a chasing game, using their bodies rather than the ribbon. Then Lily came to me. It seems that I was perceived by her as a new object of knowledge. When she was hugging me it seems to have had a component of infantile sexuality but at the same time as if she was trying to explore how to create knowledge, this time by touching a man. She seems to enjoy this new way of knowing. Mother released me from the hugs and then went back to make a link with the T.V.

Luke's putting on of Mother's shoes indicates that he is in a state of early identification with her. Mother told him to take off the shoes and then returned to watching T.V. She did not offer Luke any other alternative, as if watching T.V. was the only option for contact. When Lily put on Mother's shoes, she was warned not to break her neck. This was the second time that Mother delivered a verbal warning (the first one was not to choke). It seems that Mother's verbal links were constantly concrete, negative and persecutory. One wonders whether Luke, who had left the room at that point, was offering Lily the possibility of a less persecutory link. In a similar way it was Luke who had drawn Lily into the game with the ribbon following Mother's warning not to choke. Lily immediately followed him and came back with Luke's shoes, which she put on, as if she was saying, "Can I identify with someone without it being dangerous?". The laces she played with appear to be similar to the ribbon in shape. One wonders whether the laces as well as the ribbon represented a masculine object with which Lily wanted to protect herself against the link represented by Mother (that is, "Empty your mind, it is dangerous to know"). In this respect Lily seems to be thinking how she could put on some of her brother's equipment to be able to think. In other words, it appears that in

order to avoid identifying with a non-thinking mother, Lily moved to identify with her brother.

It was only when the film was over that Mother got back to herself, to the children and to me, telling me that Lily had an imaginary friend. In a way she was telling me that Lily was capable of developing a phantasy. Still, she made no effort to understand it (see also, Lily - Interpretations, pp. 52-57).

It would appear that the fact that Mother could perceive the T.V. as the only option of contact prevented her from offering the children any alternative link. Thus if the children identified with her and formed the only link she was capable of, it resulted in making themselves mindless like Mother. When Lily tried to be different from Mother and identify with a person with whom she could form a different link she was unsupported, mainly because Mother had no notion in her mind of a different way of thinking and relating. In this respect Mother had no acknowledgement of Lily as being separate from her, i.e. different. This situation is perhaps well demonstrated in Observation 7, 10.12.91, pp. 15 - 17: "When I arrived Lily smiled and said hello to me ... as I entered the living room Lily said to me, 'I am not playing with you' ... They both watched T.V. for five minutes. Then Mother unexpectedly asked Lily why she had told me that she would not play with me ... Lily ran over to me and hugged me ... she brought a hair brush ... she brushed her own hair ... she said that she wanted to wet the brush and went to the toilet ... she came back and brushed her hair ... Mother said to Lily, 'What did you do at nursery?'. Lily said, 'pictures' ... Lily said she was going to the toilet and left the room".

After a sequence of ten to fifteen minutes Mother unexpectedly asked Lily what she had meant when she had said earlier that she would not play with Yaron. This question seems somewhat bizarre as it was so much out of context, as if Lily was constantly in Mother's mind. It would appear that in this state Mother had no acknowledgement of Lily being separate from her. Once Mother raised this question, as if she was saying, "You don't think like me, you have a mind of your own", Lily then came over to me and hugged me. She followed this by a chain of actions: fetching the hair brush, wetting her hair and brushing her hair. Rather than passively watching T.V., Lily was doing things.

It seems that once Mother separated from her, Lily managed to be in touch with an understanding object (hugging me) and she then became active. Her actions at that point related to her hair and seemed to be a concrete preoccupation with thoughts. Though Mother allowed Lily to play she gave Lily no encouragement such as, "What nice hair" or "That's pretty hair". It seems as if Mother had a limited repertoire of reactions and then came the question, "What did you do in nursery today?". It seems that the function of this question was to fill up the time, that she uses her language not in the service of communicating thoughts but as a means of evacuating them. Accordingly Lily's answer was a telegraphic one word answer, "pictures". In this way Lily seems to be identifying with Mother's speech and way of thinking, thoughts which were reduced to the minimum requested by Mother. When Lily said, "I am going to the toilet", using a full sentence, she seems to be more separate from Mother and therefore able to use more elaborate language. (See also Interpretations - Lily, pp. 58 - 61).

#### 7.25. Mother and the observer : the idealised couple

After Christmas Luke left the nursery he and Lily had attended and moved on to school. It seems that this development caused a shift of the dynamics in the family and in the observations. Mother reported that Luke had not had a crisis in the transition, that he enjoyed his new school, and that it was actually Lily who had had a crisis, refusing to separate from Mother, crying when she was left at nursery in the morning. It appeared that Luke enjoyed being in a stimulating environment and Lily was the one who regressed. (See Observation 14, 28.1.92, pp. 25 - 28). Lily was persecuted to some extent by the pain of losing Luke, who represented the part of herself which was capable of making links of thought. In the observations, Lily's activities seemed more aimless and fragmented than they had been in earlier observations, sequences difficult to follow and to remember. (See, for example, Observations, 14, 15 and 16, pp. 25 - 33). In my counter-transference feelings I lost interest in the girl, I experienced her as a silly nuisance, an extra burden to bear in my cosy relationship with Mother and the T.V. films. At times I was alarmed by how much I despised her in the counter-transference. On the other hand

Christina made a lively couple with me, almost always excluding and denigrating the little girl as part of the formation of this idealised couple. Mother's direct links with Lily were mainly links of anger, but she was unable to set non-humiliating limits that would help the girl in making differentiations in the service of thinking.

This situation is well demonstrated in Observation 14, 28.1.92, pp. 25 - 28: " ... Lily was sitting in the kitchen eating yogourt. I said hello but she looked at me, not answering ... Mother said to her ... 'Why don't you say hello to Yaron?' Lily smiled and said softly, 'Because I don't want to'. Mother told her not to be cheeky, otherwise she would smack her ... I had the feeling that Lily was spiteful rather than sad ... Lily finished her yogourt and wanted a second one ... Mother offered me a cup of tea ... talking to me about the estate ... Lily who had eaten a few spoonfuls ... threw the yogourt into the rubbing bin. Mother shouted at her ... Lily scribbled that she was a fish ... and then a star ... Mother invited me to the living room ... and said that *Home and Away* was about to begin ... Lily came and sat on Mother's lap, leaning her face on her chest and Mother hugged her ... Lily hugged my neck, leaning her face on my head ... Mother smiled, asking 'What are you doing to Yaron?' ... 'Poor Yaron, what are you doing to him?' ... I lifted Lily in the air and stood her on the floor ... Lily said to me, 'Come and see me jumping' and went to her parents' bedroom. She climbed onto the head support and jumped down onto the mattress, falling and laughing ... I felt ... I was colluding with her in something exciting. I decided to go back to the living room, telling her that I was going back there ... Lily came back to the living room ... She returned from the kitchen with two empty yogourt containers ... She knocked the containers together and said she was playing music with them ... She looked at me, smiled, ... and told me that she had new pants ... She put one leg on my foot smiling at me ... She picked up Mother's coffee cup and drank from it ..".

Throughout the interaction with Mother as to whether or not she should say hello, Lily maintained eye contact with me. It appears that Lily was challenging Mother's authority and this seems to relate to a question in Lily's mind as to whether I came to visit her or her and Mother. In the past Lily had referred to me as "the man who came to see me" (see Observation 2, pp. 4 - 6 and Observation 5, pp. 8 - 10). It appears that if the answer was



that I came to visit her and Mother then Lily would challenge it. When Lily challenged Mother she seemed to be trying to create a link with me which was different from the link that went via Mother. Throughout the sequence in the kitchen Mother talked to me, at times about Lily, but she did not include Lily in the conversation, as if she were not there. The alternative to this could have been a conversation with me but to make it a three-person conversation. It appears that Lily's request for a second yogourt as Mother was talking to me was an attempt to create a couple. Mother went on talking to me, taking no notice of Lily, and after a while Lily threw the second yogourt in the rubbish bin. Throwing away the second yogourt, Lily seems to be saying, "In my mind there is no couple who can nourish me". At that point Mother shouted at her, thus making a direct link with Lily. It appears that Mother made direct links with Lily mainly when she was angry. This corresponds to the persecutory links Mother made with Lily in earlier observations, mainly warning Lily (See Observation 5 and Observation 7, pp. 15 - 17). This resulted in Lily's experience represented by the star and the fish that she drew after she had thrown away the second yogourt. The star is an element in the sky, the fish is an element in the water, and it seems that Lily found it impossible to connect the two together. These elements may have represented Mother and Lily or perhaps a nourishing couple which Lily could not establish in her mind. Again Mother made a link with me - the tea, and then invited me into the living room to share *Home and Away* with her, where the "real life" was. It looks as if Mother's interaction with me was more lively, intimate and warm than her interaction with Lily. Lily refused to come to the living room and that was perhaps a second round of challenging Mother.

When Lily sat on Mother's lap leaning her face on Mother's breast she seems to be in touch with a "protective mother" and indeed at that point Mother hugged her. But nevertheless, Mother did not give up watching T.V. When Lily came to me she seems to be bringing to me the protective mother figure in her mind. One wonders whether she hugged me in the same way that Mother had hugged her when she was leaning on her breast. From this position Lily seems to be trying to make a couple with me. Her behaviour at that point indicates that she enjoyed making this type of contact with me.

When Mother said to Lily, "What are you doing to Yaron ... poor Yaron", she seems to be saying, "If you bring these baby parts to Yaron it will damage him and we will not be able to maintain the image of an idealised couple". It appears that when Mother wanted Lily to stop that game she was not capable of setting the limits actively by saying something like: "You have enjoyed it so far, but now leave Yaron in peace and go and do something else".

When Lily demonstrated her jumping in the parents' bedroom, I felt in my counter-transference that she was enacting something sexual, probably a concrete representation of an intercourse, which I felt was too exciting for her. I therefore returned to the living room, thus making a link with Mother. Following my reinstatement of an adult link with Mother, Lily came back to the living room, "making music" with the two empty yogourt containers. The two yogourt containers represented a couple making love, as if Lily was trying to work out whether she could create a sexual parental couple without her being a partner with it. When I returned to the living room and my adult link with Mother, it seems as if I was saying, "Enough of the sexual excitement"; it mobilised Lily to stop the concrete play of the intercourse and she produced a phantasy about it - the music of the yogourt containers. Thus Lily appears to recover the protective mother image she had lost when Mother had not been able to set the limits.

When Lily came over to me, touching me and telling me about her panties, she seems to be saying, "I can be as exciting as Mother". Because I felt that this contact was very exciting for Lily, I moved my feet. It would appear that in this sequence as well as in the jumping sequence, unconsciously I was keeping my adult link with Mother and saying "no" to Lily. Doing this, I seem to supply the little girl with a particular type of container. Keeping Mother and her link with me in my mind created an extra containing space to contain Lily. This kind of containment was quite different from the empty "T.V. container" offered by Mother.

From the observation as a whole it appears that Mother was present in Lily's mind as a protective figure but only on a pre-genital level. Mother was incapable of fulfilling the function of setting limits in the service of making differentiations . The pre-requisite for a

parent to be capable of making these differentiations is to be able to bear the feelings that she/he is a bad parent whereas at the same time to know that she/he is a good mother/father. In a state in which there is an infantile idealised couple this cannot take place.

#### 7.26 If you want to identify with me you must be stupid

The idealised couple that Mother had formed with me which excluded the little girl seems to reflect the parents' relationship with Lily in reality. Assuming that when I was not there Lily had no refuge from the parents' projections portrays quite a grim picture of Lily's developmental prospects if she was to identify with Mother and with Father in order to develop. This painful state is well demonstrated by Observation 20, 11.3.92, pp. 39 - 41, when Father was present at home: " ... Lily kept on saying 'come in' until I reached the living room. Mother was sitting in 'her armchair'. Father was sitting in the other armchair and I sat on the sofa ... Lily tried to sit herself on my lap next to the dog. She hugged my neck and smiled at me. I gently tried to take her hands off my neck but she held on tightly. I asked her if she was saying hello to me in this way and she said she was. Mother asked her if she was giving me a cuddle but Lily did not respond ... Lily went to the boys' room ... After fifteen minutes she came back with the dog's lead ... Lily sat on Father's lap. Father caressed her and asked her what she had been doing at nursery. Lily did not respond ... Father attached the dog's lead to Lily's skirt ... Father attached the other end of the lead to the dog and told it to go. Lily started crying ... Mother told him to stop it before Lily screamed ... Lily sat on the floor ... she made knots on the lead ... she waved the lead above her head ... and then went to the kitchen ... she said that she was looking for the bag with her wet trousers in it. Turning to me she said she had wet her trousers ... she brought the wet trousers to me. Mother told her that Yaron was not interested in her wet trousers ... She brought a chain made of pasta to Mother asking her to tie it to make a necklace ... She took the pasta chain to Father who looked at it and agreed that it was impossible to tie it ... She sat next to me, trying to tie both ends of the pasta chain together ... She went to the boys' room. She returned with a

doll which she sat on my coat which was on the sofa. She sat between me and the doll. She lay the doll on her lap ... I asked her what she was doing and she answered, 'Nothing'. She went to the boys' room and returned with a white jumper with which she dressed the doll. She sat and held the doll in a breast feeding position, hugging it ... She said she was doing 'nothing'. She put the pasta chain around the doll's neck and sat it on her lap facing the T.V. She watched T.V. ... Lily followed me to the door saying goodbye".

Throughout the observation Lily was trying to pair with me in the presence of the real couple. When she came to sit on my lap and hugged me, the real parental couple who were laughing seem to be very united. It would seem that, by pairing with me, Lily was projecting her Oedipal rivalry and jealousy on the parents. The laughter of the parents appears to fulfil a function: to distinguish reality from phantasy. Laughing clearly seems to indicate to the girl that it was a phantasy, not a reality. It looks as if this distinction enabled Lily to play, as it evoked a lessened anxiety. Hugging me seems to incorporate an element of sexual excitement, which I tried unsuccessfully to neutralise. I then tried another way by giving Lily a second option when I asked her: "Are you saying hello to me?" This time I managed to transform an intense desire into a verbal representation, and Lily said "Yes" and released my neck.

Mother then asked Lily whether she really gave me a cuddle. It seems that Mother was trying to fragment the level of symbolic verbal representation and to revert back to the level of excitement. Thus Mother rejected symbolic representation. This was the first point in the observation that symbolic representation had failed. Mother would probably have been satisfied by Lily saying that she was giving me a cuddle. Mother was unable to differentiate a sexual cuddle from a non-sexual cuddle, a sexual couple from a non-sexual couple. As Mother did not make much use of symbols in the service of making finer distinctions it seems that making differentiations threatened her. Thus Mother blocked Lily from making different degrees of differentiations. It seems that unconsciously Mother was saying to Lily: "If you want to identify with me you must be like me - non-thinking". Rather than functioning as a mother who received the projection of the child and modifying them through thinking, Christina projected her own

damaged parts on Lily. Thus Lily was faced with a non-thinking, projecting mother if she was to identify with her. Lily's only way to avoid identification with this aspect of Mother and to keep on thinking was to shift to identify with Father, or with a masculine object.

It was at that point that Lily went to the boys' room defeated and hurt. Perhaps she was trying to find out whether she could take something from an identification with males in order to recover.

She came back with the dog's lead with which she attempted to make a concrete link with the dog. The dog, who was so dearly loved by all the family members, seems to be the object into which all of them projected the idealised parts of themselves. She came to Father and he responded to her, caressing her. However, Lily did not respond to his question about the nursery and it seems that Father could not tolerate that. His reaction was to treat her like a dog and he tied her to the lead. It would appear that Lily thought that Father was playing with her and she seems to have had a wish for a relationship. The humiliating element in this play was the fact that Lily was turned by him into an animal in order to amuse him. Mother told John to stop it "before Lily began to scream" - not because it was humiliating. Their cruelty towards Lily seems to be similar to children's cruelty - they used her in a way that children use a toy but they do not seem to have a sadistic intention. Following that sequence, when Lily sat on the floor she seems to be reduced into a little girl rather than the "big girl" who wanted to play with Father. Making many knots in the lead, Lily seems to attack the link she had tried to make, turning it into something different, waving it around as if she wanted to throw it all over the place.

Later, when Lily wanted to bring her wet trousers to show me, she seems to be saying: "I lost control, I am hurt, and I want to show you the evidence of how anxious I felt as I do not have an internal mother who can control the discharge of my anxiety and anger". Again, it is important to note that the verbal communication was with me. It was Mother who again attacked Lily's verbal link with me by saying to Lily that Yaron was not interested in seeing her wet trousers.

Bringing the pasta chain and asking for help in closing it Lily seems to be preoccupied with some thoughts about the possibility of making a real connection. Though one can easily perceive of a similar situation where a parent would use sellotape or a piece of string to connect the chain, Christina and John agreed with each other that this was impossible. Unconsciously both parents seem to imply: "We can not afford full scale links".

When Lily then came to sit next to me she seems to be thinking whether it was possible to create with me things that would link. She then went to the boys' room and one has the impression that she went there in order to recover following the parents' refusal to function as her organising object. The room appears to represent a male environment and going there Lily seems to be turning to me at that point. She came back with the doll, which probably represented her infantile part. She sat the doll on my coat and she sat herself between me and the doll, thus creating a new pair - me and herself. It appears that my coat was a representation of myself receiving Lily's infantile part. As I have tried to point out, Mother tended to resolve situations by projecting. Lily seems to be searching for an object capable of containing and internalising. Using my coat she seems to turn to me to supply her with this space.

Lily then fetched the white jumper which she put on the doll. The jumper appear to stand for my coat which represented me containing Lily; that what she dressed the doll with and in doing so she seems to be demonstrating how she was internalising. Once she received this type of containment from me she held the doll in a breast feeding position, probably a phantasy about nourishing the doll and herself, and this appears to be a demonstration of the model she had just internalised. She said she was doing "nothing" and one wonders whether in that context "nothing" meant "no - thing". Perhaps she was creating a non concrete representation, a symbol, but she did not have the words to say it. Sitting with the doll on her lap, putting the pasta chain around its neck and then watching T.V. seems to be a state of regression. It appears that in doing so Lily was demonstrating the kind of archaic maternal object she had in her mind. Watching T.V. in that state she seems to be teaching the doll the mechanism she had learned from Mother - emptying her

mind. Perhaps when she followed me to the door and said goodbye she recovered from that regressive state - she shared with me my model for separation rather than connecting herself to the T.V. as a defence against the slightest frustration and pain.

### 7.27. My fate if I am to identify with my parents

In the face of parents who could be with their children only if the children were a part of the parents, Lily appeared to be trapped, having no escape route to be able to develop. Identifying with Mother entailed an acceptance of herself as a mindless, stupid girl. When she changed to identify with Father she was no better off. On the level of mental organisation on which he functioned, Father could offer the girl only concrete links. he was unable to name the children's feeling and activities, thus helping them to develop thoughts. On the contrary, he tended to push the girl into primary concrete thinking in which pictures replaced words. In the interactions with Father, the child's attempts to think about her experiences developed into games based on excitement, physical stimulation and seduction. These games Father used to stop when it was convenient for him, usually when he wanted to watch T.V. again. Thus, Father demonstrated for a while how potent he could be - making the girl laugh, "giving her a good time", but he then dumped his "toy" and returned to watching T.V. (See, for example, Observation 22, p. 44: "What did you do at nursery today ... draw me a picture ... tickle ... laughter", and the corresponding interpretations, p. 68). On top of that, Father humiliated Lily. When the girl separated from Father, completing the cycle of identifications, returning to identify with Mother, she seemed to be defeated, ready to accept her identity as a stupid girl. This constellation is well demonstrated in Observation 22, 24.3.92, pp. 41 - 45: "... Luke and Lily went down to the playground area ... Luke came upstairs and Lily went on riding the bicycle for a while longer ... (The parents came out) they stood next to me by the bannisters and watched Lily riding. Lily noticed them, waved to them and they waved back at her. Lily rode towards the swing, drove straight into it and it knocked her off the bicycle. She lay on the ground on her back, not moving. Mother said to Father, 'silly cow', and started to laugh. They both continued to laugh for a little while. I found it

distressing and I felt alarmed as Lily did not move and did not make any sound ... Lily started to cry. Mother shouted to her to stand up but she did not move ... Mother asked Luke to go down and see if Lily was really crying. Luke reached Lily and called from there that she was really crying. Mother went down, picked Lily up and sat her on the bicycle. Mother reported to Father, 'there are no tears'. Father smiled and went inside ... As Lily approached the front door, Mother asked if she had really been hurt. Lily turned to Mother saying 'yes', and then winked. Lily laughed and Mother joined in her laughter. Luke observed them with a blank expression on his face. They went to the living room. Mother joined Father on the sofa. Lily sat next to Father. They watched T.V."

When the parents came outside Lily waved to them and they waved back at her. Waving, Lily seems to be making a new link with the parents. Until that moment Lily was riding her bicycle safely. It seems as if the minute that Lily made a link with the parents, and that would mean to internalise them to some extent, she rode straight into the swing and then collapsed. By collapsing, Lily seems to be saying, "This is my fate if I am to identify with my parents and grow up". In this respect Lily was carrying on her back very destructive aspects of the parents, especially of Mother. Mother called Lily a "silly cow" and she laughed. She was not able to receive the girl's communication regarding her anxiety. Both parents laughed, thus manically converting the anxiety into a laugh and it was only me who felt alarmed. By laughing, the couple seem to be reunited at the expense of the girl, who was demolished into a cow. In a way Mother seems to be saying: "I can identify with the girl only if she is a silly cow". One wonders how Lily can identify with a mother who sees her as such.

Luke was sent down to report back if Lily was crying, he was not sent to help Lily. When he reported: "tears", Mother went to check and reported back: "no tears" and put Lily back on to her bicycle. At this point the parents appear to deny the whole sequence, as if it did not happen. Then everything returned back to normal - Father went to watch T.V. and Lily and Mother came upstairs. Mother then asked Lily if she had really hurt herself and Lily said yes but winked. It seems that Mother did not ask a question but rather said: "you did not hurt yourself". Thus Mother invited Lily to deny the fact that



she did hurt herself. Accordingly, Lily said "yes" and winked. In that context "yes" meant "no". When this kind of contact is taking place the sense of reality is destroyed. It looks as if Luke, who had checked whether Lily was "really crying" was functioning as the eyes of the family, representing consciousness and reality. It is therefore no surprise that Luke was watching Mother and Lily with a blank expression on his face as if he was lost. In the sequence as a whole, Mother seems to be saying to Lily: "If you want to be one of us you must learn to deny and to pretend that nothing has happened, you cannot upset me".

Once Lily had identified with Mother, winking and laughing, she created a "happy" group watching T.V. Watching T.V., Lily seems to complete the cycle of identification as if she were saying, "now I am like Mother". Thus she appears to become the "silly cow" part of Mother. One's impression is that as the parents idealised each other, the girl became a bad object absorbing all the projections of the damaged parts of both parents. The consequence of this state was that Lily was treated as if she were an animal - a humiliated, silly cow.

### 7.28 Summary

The psychological processes described in this chapter need to be seen in the context of the larger social scene. The parents had little education and therefore not much hope of social improvement. In the reality of living on a deteriorating council estate it is probably common for people to block the capacity to think in order to bypass the sense of hopelessness. The endless TV watching becomes quite understandable.

All this made for a destructive model of development being made available to the girl.

The central psychological factors were:—

- (1) The immaturity of the parents as expressed in their cruelty towards Lily and in their inability to envision the girl as being in any way different from themselves.
- (2) The parents' tendency to create an idealised couple, while denigrating the girl, who then contained the damaged aspects of themselves; this was especially true of the mother.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**

**ANN**

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **ANN**

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## **8.1. RESULTS : ANN**

### **8.11 The initial contact and family background**

I was put in touch with Mrs S by her health visitor whose help I had asked in finding a family for the purpose of my research. A few weeks later the health visitor phoned me and said that she had found a mother who was interested in having an observer. She said that she had told the mother that I was a child psychotherapist undertaking research about children of single mothers and that I was looking for a two-parent Indian family with a girl between two and three years old, as part of my control group. She said that both Mrs S and her husband were pleasant, educated people, and she thought that I would enjoy observing them. I then phoned Mrs S and we arranged to meet in her house a few days later.

The family lives in a modern house in a pleasant neighbourhood in North London. In front of the house there is a small, well-kept garden and a parking area. The ground floor consists of a very large living room which opens into an open-plan kitchen and dining room, thus creating a very large space. There is a sofa blocking most of the passage between the kitchen and the living room, dividing the large space. There are French doors leading to the garden and this gives a spacious feeling to the kitchen. There is a dining table at the end of the kitchen near the work top area and the T.V. is next to the French doors. By the T.V. there are two large boxes containing the children's toys.

Along the wall between the French doors and the living room there is another sofa and above it there are two long shelves full of golf medals and cups won by Mr S, who is an enthusiastic golfer. The area of the kitchen/dining room is arranged in a functional way and is the centre of the family's activities (see Diagram, Appendix p.269). Throughout the six-month observations I always stayed in the kitchen and have not been in other parts of the house.

Mrs S is in her early thirties. She has dark skin, brown eyes, short straight dark hair, and rounded features. She is short and thin and comes across as a somewhat boyish, shy adolescent girl rather than a mature woman.

Ann was two years and nine months when I started the observations. She has very lively large brown eyes, dark straight short hair and dark skin. She is thin and petite. Her facial features resemble those of her mother. She comes across as a very lively, friendly and bright little girl.

Pearl is five and a half. She has dark, long, straight hair and brown skin which is paler than Mrs S's skin colour. She has facial features similar to Mr S and a less rounded face than her mother. She is more beautiful than her mother and Ann and comes across as an alert, friendly, very bright, but angry girl.

Mr S is in his early thirties. He is of medium height, has dark hair and brown skin. He comes across as a pleasant, gentle, handsome man.

Following the telephone conversation, I came to meet Mrs S. As she opened the front door she commented that she assumed that I was Mr Mazliach. I introduced myself and we shook hands. She did not introduce herself by her first name and it was only towards the end of the period of the observations that I felt that I could ask her what her first name was. Nor did she use my first name during the period of the first half of the observations. She invited me into the kitchen and called Ann who was watching T.V. upstairs. Ann came into the kitchen and Mother then told her that: "This is the Uncle I said would come to see you". I introduced myself to Ann as "Yaron" and asked her if she knew why I had come. Ann said: "To see me". She smiled and then asked Mother's permission to go upstairs to continue watching T.V.

I asked Mrs S whether she wanted me to tell her some information about myself and the research I was doing. I told her about my background and about the research. She asked whether I had come to any definite conclusion as to the effect of the absence of the father on the children, and whether the children of the control group were different from the children of the single mothers. She then asked whether the single mothers worked and she wondered about what impact it had on the children. She then asked me if I was married and whether I had children. She told me that she was a pharmacologist. She had come from Kenya to study pharmacology and met her husband at University; they married and then decided to stay in Britain. She told me that Mr S was an accountant,

that he worked long hours, leaving the house at 7.30 am. and not returning until about 10.30 pm., and that he saw the children only at weekends if he did not play golf. Mrs S told me that Ann was starting nursery in September and that she would then start working and would "enjoy using her head again" after six years of not being at work. Mrs S asked if I would be flexible about the times I would come and wondered what would happen during the holidays. I answered her and then commented that she sounded as if she had made up her mind to have me as an observer. She laughed and agreed that she had. We decided that Tuesdays at 9.15 am. would suit us both as a permanent time for the observations (See as well Observation 1, 18.2.92, pp. 77-79). It seems that the basic feature of Mrs S's relationship with me was already evident at the initial meeting. The avoidance of using first names was probably a result of two factors. The main element was cultural: encountering a male, non-family person who was about to be accepted into the family in a definite role. 'Uncle' in that situation was a term used to communicate to the girl that I was someone who could be trusted. The second element was probably Mrs S's anxiety at being in an intimate situation with me. By defining me as "Uncle" when I was presented to the little girl, Mrs S located me in close proximity but at the same time she removed my sexual aspect. Once I "became an Uncle" I was given a role within the organisation of the family. The role was in relation to the task - to observe Ann, and therefore Mrs S called the little girl to the kitchen as soon as I arrived. In this context, where Ann defined my role as: "You come to see me", it took only a short time and little effort to displace Mother. However, as the observations proceeded Mrs S gradually created with me quite a powerful couple and struggled along with the girl to negotiate the possibility of establishing a triangular relationship where one can tolerate rivalry, jealousy and envy. During the second half of the period of observations Mrs S appeared to reach an emotional recognition of the "real" relationship as being located in the adult couple and she was then able to allow the girl to explore phantasy relationships. Throughout the six months of observations I always felt welcomed and the mother often shared with me her thoughts: about the girls, and about politics and social events.

## 8.12 A summary of a sample of observations

### Observation 2 - 25.2.92

Mother opened the door saying, "Come in quickly, you must be frozen, go and stand by the radiator and I will make you a cup of tea or coffee". I hung my coat by the front door and followed her to the kitchen. She told me that Ann was still asleep as it was Pearl's half term. She said that Ann would wake up soon.

Pearl was sitting at the table and Mother introduced me to her as "Uncle". I sat at the table opposite Pearl and asked her if she knew that I was coming. Pearl said that she did know and Mother added, "we had been waiting for you for five minutes". Pearl had a book in front of her. She showed me the book and then read aloud a few words. She said she learned how to read at school. I commented that she was a big girl and Pearl smiled, saying that she was a big girl. I asked her how old she was and she said she was five years old.

Mother told me that they had been to the theatre the day before and that Ann had fallen asleep in the middle. She added that Ann was afraid of the ghosts in the play. Ann spoke on the intercom and Mother told me that she was saying in Gujerati 'Ann is awake'. Mother said that now Ann would say in bed playing for a few minutes and that when she wanted to get out of bed she would speak loudly and urgently. Through the intercom I heard Ann singing and talking to herself. Meanwhile Pearl started writing numbers and then did sums. Mother said that Pearl had been accepted at Haberdashers but for financial reasons they had decided not to send her to a private school until she was 11. Ann started speaking Gujerati loudly and it had the feel of some urgency. Mother smiled and said that Ann was ready to get out of bed. Mother asked Pearl which one of them would go to Ann. Pearl said that she did not want to go upstairs and Mother went. Pearl followed her and came back after two or three minutes. She sat opposite me and said that someone said goodbye. She then asked me when I was going. I said that I would go in twenty minutes. Pearl said that she knew about time, adding that there were sixty minutes in an hour. She asked me how long I stayed. I said that I stayed for fifty minutes. She said that was less than an hour. She wrote 60 on a piece of paper and said



that she would find the difference between 50 and 60. She wrote: "60 - 19 = ". Mother came in carrying Ann in her arms. She sat with Ann at the head of the table. Ann looked at me and she seemed still sleepy. I said 'Hello' to Ann and she answered 'Hello' slowly. Pearl said to Mother that she was trying to find out how much less than an hour I stayed there. Mother said that it should be 60 - 10 and not 60 - 19. Mother drew six squares writing 10 inside each square. She crossed out the last square saying to Pearl that only the last 10 minute square I did not stay there. Pearl insisted that it should be 60 - 19 and Mother repeated the same explanation. Pearl argued that she knew that it was 60 - 19. Mother did not answer and I felt that she was angry and hurt by Pearl. As they talked, Ann was listening to their conversation.

Mother said that Ann had a fever and told her to go upstairs and bring the Calpol. Ann went upstairs. Meanwhile Mother prepared cereal and milk for Ann. Pearl told me that she knew how to draw a clown. She drew a clown and said its name was Juggler. Pearl wrote "clown" and then "Juggler". Ann came back with the Calpol. She put it on the table and pulled a drawing of a clown from a pile which was on the table. She said she had done it at school and pointed at the face saying: "eyes, nose, mouth".

Mother asked Ann if she wanted to have breakfast and Ann said she did. Mother sat her in the high chair next to Pearl. Ann ate her breakfast, observing Pearl, who meanwhile drew a tree. Pearl asked me what it was. I replied that it was a tree. Pearl said that it was the apple tree at the bottom of the garden.

Pearl moved to stand between me and Mother. She said that if she kicked someone she would break their bones. Mother said: "You can think it but you are not allowed to do it". Turning to me, Mother said that Pearl was a very angry girl and she seldom felt that Pearl was happy. Pearl confirmed this, saying that she was always angry. Mother said that she found it difficult that Pearl was always angry with her. She added that she was angry also with Ann and most of the time they quarrelled. I asked if they shared their toys. Pearl said that she kept the games for herself and the toys she had given to Ann. I asked if she had given Ann her dolls. Pearl said that she had never had dolls, only

teddies, which she kept. She said that she much preferred teddies to dolls as they were hairy.

Mother said that Ann was usually content and happy whereas Pearl was always angry and discontent. She said it had started when Pearl was two years old when she was pregnant with Ann. She said that until then Pearl was a happy baby.

As Mother talked to me Pearl fetched the doctor set. She gave me an injection in my arm and the injection turned me into a horse. then she said that I had become an elephant who could feed itself with its trunk. While Pearl played with me Mother watched her closely.

Ann finished her cereal and said that she wanted to get down. Mother took her down.

Ann went and stood by Pearl, next to Mother. Pearl meanwhile took two containers and told me that one had cream in it that if I applied it to myself I would become a girl with long hair. The other container had cream that would turn me into a boy but then I would have white hair. She asked me which cream I wanted. I said that I would stay a boy.

Mother asked Pearl whether she wanted to be a boy or a girl. Pearl said that she wanted to be a mother and to cook. Mother asked if Pearl did not want to go to work like Father. Pearl said that she wanted to be like Mother. Then Pearl said that she wanted to be Ann, that she wanted to be a baby. As Pearl spoke, Ann took the two containers and told me that she would put cream on my leg and my back and I would have hair.

It was time to stop and I said so. Pearl said that she did not want me to go. I said that I would see her again at Easter. Pearl said, "on Tuesday". Mother said, "you'll be at school". Pearl said that she would not go. I told Pearl that I would see her at Easter. They all followed me to the door.

### Observation 3 - 4.3.92

The door bell did not seem to work and as I was not sure whether it rang or not I waited for a minute before trying to ring again. Mother came to the door, opened it and said that the bell did not work but as they were waiting for me she came to the door to check if I had arrived. I followed Mother to the kitchen. Ann was sitting at the table with

working sheets and she was writing numbers. She smiled at me and said hello. I sat at the table, opposite to her. Mother sat at the head of the table. Ann wrote 2 many times, each time saying "two". Mother corrected her 2 until she managed to write it properly. She smiled as if she was pleased that she had managed to write 2. She said she would write 3 but could not manage it. After a few attempts to write 3 she drew a triangle, saying "triangle". She then counted the sides of the triangle and said it had four sides. Mother said it had three sides, not four. Ann counted again and said four. Mother asked why it had four sides, not three. Ann said: "four". Mother took three pencils and made a triangle with them. She told Ann to count the sides. Ann counted three sides and then took a fourth pencil from the pencil case. She added the pencil to the side of the triangle and said "four". Ann said: "One for daddy, one for mummy, one for Ann and one for Pearl". Mother laughed and said "this really is four".

Ann started writing again. She wrote 2 but called out "five". Mother said that it was two, not five, and added that 5 was a difficult number to write. Mother then moved to the area of the sink and offered me coffee. As Mother made the coffee Ann continued to write. She drew a circle with green and then coloured it. She drew a few more circles, saying "circle" each time she drew one. Then Ann looked at my face and said it was like a circle. She then said that her face was like a circle. She took an orange pencil, drew a circle and said it was an orange; she said she liked eating oranges. She drew a few more oranges. Mother brought the coffee and sat on my right at the head of the table.

Mother told me that at school they teach Ann writing as she had good pencil control.

Meanwhile Ann drew a circle and said it was a spider. Mother asked where its arms were and Ann added three lines as arms. Ann started saying "Little Miss Muffet" and Mother completed the sentences when Ann didn't remember. Mother smiled and she seemed amused. Ann drew two more spiders and then said that she was afraid of spiders.

Mother told me that Ann was afraid of insects and in the Spring and Summer when she went into the garden she ran back inside whenever she saw one. She commented that Pearl, unlike Ann, was not afraid of insects. Ann said she was afraid of ants. Mother said that Ann could see ants from a long distance and that this made her doubt whether Ann

was really short-sighted. Ann took a book which was on the table on her right side, and opened it. It had different pictures and she turned the pages over until she came to a picture of a lot of bees. Ann said that she was afraid that they would sting her. Mother said: "Which one is the odd one out". Ann pointed at a bee in the centre which was darker. Mother said "why?" Ann said "because it is brown". She turned the page to a picture of butterflies and pointed at the odd one out, explaining that it was white. She did the same with a few more pictures of the same kind. She came across a picture in which the task was to make pairs between different objects: chicken and a chick, cow and milk, etc. She took a pencil and lined the five or six pairs without making a mistake. Mother praised her for each link, saying "that's a clever girl". When she had finished her task she pointed at a picture of the chick and the baby pig, saying "this is me". Mother asked her what she would do at school and Ann replied that she would draw with blue, yellow and green crayons.

It was time to stop and I said so. mother said to Ann: "Tell Uncle to come next Tuesday". Ann repeated it. Mother said, "Do you like Uncle coming?". Ann said "yes" and smiled. They both followed me to the door.

#### Observation 7 - 31.3.92

Mother opened the door. Ann, who was sitting on the stairs opposite the door, said: "Uncle Doctor, I have put the game of dominoes on the table, come and play with me". As I took off my coat Ann told Mother to go and wash the dishes while she played with Uncle. I sensed that Mother was hurt. Mother laughed and said: "Mother's job is to wash the dishes and put Ann to sleep. Father and Uncle play with you". Ann responded by saying: "Go and wash the dishes".

I asked if Ann played with Father. Ann said that Father played hide and seek. Mother said that Father did not put the children to bed. Ann said that Father was a boy and boys did not put children to bed.

We all went into the kitchen. I sat on my usual chair. Mother sat on her chair at the head of the table. Ann fetched the doctor's set and put it on the table. She said that she

was a doctor and Uncle was also a doctor. She then said to me: "You are the real doctor". Mother laughed. Ann brought a doll and put it on the table saying that the doll was unwell. She put the thermometer in the doll's mouth. Then she gave it to me, telling me to put it in my mouth. Mother told me that last week she had worked for three days and that Ann objected. Meanwhile Ann gave an injection to the doll. Mother told me that the day before she was reading a newspaper and Ann had told her not to read it as it was Father's newspaper. She said that it disturbed her that Ann perceived her only as the one who cooked and cleaned and not as a professional person as well. Meanwhile Ann pretended to put powder on the doll, saying that it was medicine, a vitamin powder. Mother asked Ann: "What do I do in hospital?". Ann said: "You are making medicines". Again Ann took the doll's temperature. She then listened to the doll's tummy with the stethoscope. She put everything back inside the doctor's set box and closed it. Ann put the box by the T.V. and brought back from there a pack of cards. She sat on her chair and said: "Now we'll all play snap". Ann dealt the cards to herself, to Mother and to me. As she did so, Mother said she would wash the dishes and moved to the sink. Ann played snap with me and after a minute or two Mother came back and joined us, saying she was ready to play. Ann said to Mother: "Go away, don't speak to Uncle". Mother sat on her chair nevertheless. I felt she was hurt. Ann dealt the cards to the three of us and we started to play. After a few seconds Ann said that she wanted to go to the toilet. Mother gave her her hand and said "Come, I'll take you to the toilet". Ann said: "Not to the garden". Mother said: "Don't worry, I am not taking you to the garden". Mother told me that Ann was afraid of going to the garden because of the insects and wasps there. Ann said that they had stung her. Mother told me that Ann was anxious about going on the train on Saturday because of the loud noise. Mother told Ann to go to the toilet and to come back. Ann started to walk but as she reached the stairs she came back saying that there was a ghost there. Mother hugged and kissed her and then said: "Go away ghost". Ann walked to the toilet. As Ann went upstairs someone knocked at the door - it was the window cleaner. Mother went outside with him. When Ann returned Mother told her that the window cleaner

was cleaning the windows upstairs and wondered if Ann would like to watch him. Ann ran upstairs and Mother stayed with me in the kitchen.

She told me that they would have to go to Kenya in July and not as they had planned, in August. She told me that Ann had said she was afraid to fly as she was too little and she wanted to go to Kenya by car.

Ann returned and went into the garden to watch the cleaner cleaning the windows on the ground floor. It was time to stop.

#### Observation 8 - 7.4.92

Ann and Mother opened the door. Ann immediately said: "Uncle, play with me".

Mother said she had to have her breakfast first. Ann ran to the kitchen and took two packets of cereal from the cupboard saying that she wanted to eat from both of them.

I sat on my usual chair. Ann climbed to sit on her high chair. Mother gave Ann a bowl with cereal and milk. Ann put her ear close to the bowl and said that it was making a noise. Mother laughed and said that it was the sound of the cereal absorbing the milk. Ann repeated the sentence. She started to eat.

Mother asked me whether I was going to vote in the election. I told her that I did not have the right to vote. Mother said that she did not know if she would vote Labour as it would mean a drop in their income. Ann, who was listening, said: "Uncle listens and speaks to me and to Mother". Mother laughed and said that when Father came he was not allowed to speak to her until Pearl and Ann went to sleep. She said that Pearl and Ann fought each other over who would speak to Father. Ann said that she wanted Uncle to play snap with her. Mother said that she should eat her food first. Ann said that it was cereal, not food.

Mother told me that Pearl had twice wet her bed last week as she has not woken her up to go to the toilet. She said that she would talk to the Health Visitor and would ask her to give her a night bell. She went on to tell me that Ann played in the garden last week and in the night woke up five times as she had dreamt about spiders and insects biting her.

She finally went to sleep in the parents' bed. Ann said that she was afraid that the insects would bit her.

Ann finished her breakfast and got down from her high chair. She went to the T.V. and picked up a red balloon from the floor there. She put it on her face and looked at me through the balloon. Still doing this, she came closer to me and looked at me. Then she threw the balloon in the air and caught it. Mother asked her to draw the curtain so that we could have some light but Ann said that she didn't want to. Mother asked her again. Ann replied that she could not touch the curtains as her hands were dirty. Mother laughed and said that Ann had learnt to make excuses. Ann told Mother to open them herself.

Ann brought the Doctor set to the table and took a syringe out of the box but then put it back. She said that she was older than Robin. Mother told me that Robin was Ann's cousin and that he was nine years old. She told Ann that she was two and a half and that Robin was nine. Ann said that she was three and a half. Ann tried to close the lid of the Doctor set. Meanwhile, Mother asked me how psychotherapists interpret dreams these days. She said that she dreamt every night and remembered all her dreams. I said that I saw dreams as a form of thinking, trying to process emotional experiences. Ann said, "Uncle, listen to me, not to Mother". Then she said: "I am older than Uncle therefore you must listen to me". Mother laughed. Ann closed the Doctor set again and ran a few times from one end of the dining room to the other. She said that she wanted to play Snap and fetched the cards and put them on the table. She sat on a chair between Mother and me. She dealt the cards and we started to play. Ann concentrated as she played and did not talk. We played silently, Mother pointing at times at Ann, when she did not notice that she could "snap" the cards. Ann "won" the game and said "I am the winner". She brought a book with letters and pictures to the table. She went through the book saying: A for apple, etc. When she came to the letter K for kangaroo, she pointed at the mother kangaroo saying it was her mummy and then pointed at the baby kangaroo saying it was Ann. She closed the book and went to pick up the red balloon. As previously, she looked at Mother at me through the balloon.

It was time to stop.

Observation 9 - 14.4.92

I arrived fifteen minutes late due to the heavy traffic. Ann and Mother opened the door and Mother said that she had assumed that I would be late as the traffic was very bad because of the I.R.A. bomb on the North Circular Road. Ann smiled at me and said: "Uncle Doctor, come and play with me". Mother told her that she would have to eat her breakfast first.

Ann led the way to the kitchen. She sat on her usual chair at the table. I sat opposite to her. Mother brought a bowl of cereal to the table and tried to pick Ann up to put her on her high chair. Ann said that she was a big girl and did not want to sit in the high chair. Mother said that she might spill her food onto her clothes and she therefore wanted her to sit in the high chair. Ann repeated that she was a big girl and that she did not want to sit in the high chair. Mother agreed that Ann should not sit in her high chair as long as she did not dirty her clothes. Ann sat and ate slowly. Meanwhile Mother sat on "her" chair and talked about the bad traffic. She then told me that in two weeks' time they were going to Central Park and would not be at home that week for the observation. Mother described the place and the different activities in it. She said that in the past they had enjoyed going there.

Ann finished eating and went to the box by the T.V. She brought a game of Dominoes from there and put it on the table, saying that she wanted to play. She sat down and gave us each a brick. Then she stopped dealing the Domino and said: "Mummy will not play, mummy will go to work". Mother laughed and said that she wanted to play, not to work. Ann agreed and finished dealing the Domino. Mother told her to put the first piece. We took turns. Once in a while Ann made a mistake, fitting a piece in the wrong place. Mother explained the rules to her and Ann corrected it. We finished playing and Ann put the Domino back in the box, which she put in the toy box by the T.V. She then fetched the Doctor set. As Ann took my blood pressure, Mother asked me the difference between envy and jealousy. I said that I thought that envy was a feeling in the context



of a two person relationship when one felt he wanted to have something that he thought the other person had. I said that jealousy involved a triangular relationship when one felt excluded and tried to possess the loved person. While I was talking, Ann shouted at me to play with her and not talk to Mother. She then said she would put cream on my hands and on my back. As I went on speaking to Mother Ann hit me gently over my chest. Mother laughed, saying that Ann felt at home with me. She then pretended to put cream over my back while I talked to Mother. Ann then crawled under the table and picked up a ball, which she threw to the further end of the room and told me to go and fetch it. I said that I thought she should fetch it and Ann did so, Mother commenting that throwing the ball to stop us talking was jealousy, not envy, and she laughed as she said it. Ann put the ball in the toy box by the T.V. and took out the Duplo which was there and joined a few of the bricks together. After a minute she left the Duplo on the floor and went to the sofa. She tried to stand on her head on the sofa and then she rolled forward. She ended up lying on her back on the sofa. She lay there for a few seconds and then said that Uncle Doctor was Ka-Ka. Mother said that Ann was really angry and jealous. It was time to stop and I said so. Ann said: "Father goes to his office to make a lot of Ka-Ka". Mother told her to stop it. I made my way to the door and Mother followed me. As we started walking to the door Ann came running, saying: "See you next week Uncle Doctor".

#### Observation 10 - 21.4.92

Pearl opened the door. She responded to my greeting, saying "hello" to me. I asked her if she remembered me and she said that she did. She went to the kitchen and I followed her. Mother was standing there cooking. Pearl sat at the table and ate her cereal. Mother told me that Ann was still asleep.

I sat on my usual chair opposite Pearl. Pearl told me that she was on half-term holiday. She said that they would be going swimming later on. She told me that she was able to swim 15 meters. She then moved to the T.V., turned it on and sat on the floor watching it.

Mother apologised for not joining me as she wanted to finish cooking before Ann woke up.

Pearl watched T.V. for seven or eight minutes. She then turned it off and took out a skipping rope from the box by the T.V. She told me that she could skip backwards and then demonstrated this to me. As she jumped we heard Ann singing on the intercom.

Pearl went on skipping. Ann started calling Mother to come and take her out of bed.

Pearl told Mother that she would go and went upstairs. As after two or three minutes they had not come down, Mother said that she would go upstairs and dress Ann.

After about five minutes they all came downstairs. Pearl turned the T.V. on and sat on the floor watching it. Ann went into the living room and from there she said: "hello Uncle".

I said hello and Ann came over to me. She said that she would bring the Doctor's set to play with me. Mother said: "breakfast first". Ann sat on her chair and Mother gave her some cereal. Ann began to eat and Mother prepared coffee for herself and for me.

Mother sat on her chair and said that on Friday they were going to Central Park. Ann said that she wanted to go to Central Park with Father and with Uncle Doctor. Mother said: "What about me?". Ann replied that Mother should stay at home. Mother asked Ann who would put her to bed. Ann said that Father and Uncle would. Pearl came to the table saying: "and who would cook for you?". Ann said: "Father and Uncle will cook for me". Mother commented that now both her daughters were competing with her. Ann said that her grandparents could come with her as well but not Mother.

Mother said: "Do you want to take everyone away from me and leave me on my own?".

Ann said: "Yes". Mother did not respond and I felt she was hurt. Pearl sat on a chair on my right. She took a piece of paper and wrote:  $100+100+99$ . She gave it to me and told me to answer it. I wrote 299 and gave her the paper. She tried to calculate it but could not. Ann came and sat on a chair on my left. She took a piece of paper, scribbled on it and said that it was an island. She said she would go to an island with Father, Uncle and her grandparents. She then went on scribbling. Meanwhile Pearl finished a drawing she was doing. She said it was her family. She said that Father was a giant in the drawing, that Mother was a monster, that she was a bad witch and that Ann was a ghost.

She said that the family in the drawing was a bad family. Ann pointed at her own drawing, saying that in her drawing Father was a giant, Mother was a monster, Pearl was a ghost and she herself was a bad witch. Mother asked Ann if she knew what a ghost was. Pearl said that it was a person who had died, he was not breathing, did not have a pulse and he was white and frightening. Mother told me that they were Hindu and in their religion the soul was eternal. She said that she found it difficult to understand the issue of reincarnation and added that she did not really believe in it, "it was not scientific". Pearl, who meanwhile wrote something she had covered, said that she was writing a letter to me, but that she wanted to know my name. Mother told her to write Uncle Doctor. Pearl insisted that she wanted to know my "real" name. I told her my name. She wanted to know how I spelt it. I told her and she wrote it on the "letter". She then showed me the letter: "Do you have enough coloured pens at your home?". She said that she wanted me to take the letter home with me, to answer it and bring it when I next came. Meanwhile Ann took a toy coin telephone and opened its drawer. She looked inside it and asked "Where is the money?". Mother gave her a few coins and while Pearl was giving me her explanation about the letter, Ann sat on the floor and inserted coins into the telephone. Once she had inserted all the coins she took them out of the telephone and inserted them again.

It was time to stop. Mother and the girls followed me to the door. Pearl stepped out of the door asking me which car was mine.

### Observation 15 - 26.5.92

Ann and Pearl came to open the front door. Pearl tried for two or three minutes but couldn't do so. Ann, who I could see through the glass, said "Hello, Uncle Doctor". Pearl went in and fetched Father, who opened the door. Father introduced himself to me and we shook hands. Mother shouted from upstairs that she would come down soon. We all went to the kitchen. Pearl was wearing her pyjamas. She sat at the table and ate some cereal. Father pointed at the desk in the living room - it was laden with papers. He apologised that he would have to continue working. I sat on "my chair" at the table.

Ann sat on the floor next to the puzzle box consisting of wooden shapes, geometrical shapes, which one had to fit into different drawings. Ann said to me, "Uncle Doctor, come and sit on the floor next to me". Mother came into the room and said that Ann had prepared this puzzle to show me that she could do it. As I was still sitting on the chair, Ann repeated the same request. I sat on the floor, leaning to the side on my hand. Ann said to me, "Not like that, sit properly next to me". I sat up straight and she shook all the pieces on to the floor. Pearl told Ann that it was a baby puzzle and that she should do another one. Ann replied that it was not a baby puzzle and moved all the pieces closer to me. She too moved closer to me and started to do the puzzle. She did it slowly and quietly, hardly making a mistake. Once or twice when she could not fit the correct piece Mother came over from the sink and guided her gently. After nine or ten minutes she had finished the puzzle. Mother praised her, saying "That's a good girl" and Ann jumped up smiling. She took the puzzle to Father, who looked at it for a few seconds, saying "That's a big girl". She returned with the puzzle and put it on the floor next to me.

Pearl came and sat by me on my left. She said she would do the puzzle. Ann brought another puzzle and said she would do it. She shook the pieces of the puzzle on to the floor on my right and piled them up. Mother came and sat on the floor between Pearl and me, watching Pearl. Mother laughingly said to me that Ann was doing the first puzzle she had had as she could do that one. She offered me coffee and Ann said that she wanted to do the coffee for Uncle Doctor. She went with Mother to the work top and together they prepared the coffee.

Meanwhile Pearl finished doing the puzzle. Mother came back with the coffee and praised Pearl, saying "That's a big girl". Mother told Pearl to go and get dressed. Pearl replied angrily that she did not want to. Mother said to her, "Don't fight with me". Pearl, still somewhat reluctant, said "O.K." and went upstairs.

Ann said she would play golf outside. She went behind the T.V. and searched inside a box of toys. She said that she could not find the ball. Mother went over to her and took a tennis ball out of the box which she gave to Ann. Ann came over to me and said, "Uncle Doctor, come and play with me". Mother said that it was too hot outside. Pearl

returned downstairs, dressed in her day clothes. She saw the tennis ball and said that it was hers. Mother told her to take another ball that was on the floor but Pearl insisted that she wanted her ball. Mother told Ann to give the tennis ball to Pearl and to take the other ball. Ann gave Pearl the tennis ball and took the other small, soft ball. She said that it was wet and that she didn't want it. Mother said that it was not wet and told Ann to take it outside. Ann refused and Mother got a big ball from behind the T.V., which she gave to Ann. She went into the garden and from there she called "Uncle Doctor, come and play with me". Mother told Pearl to put her white shoes on before she went outside. Pearl refused and said that she wanted the sports shoes. Pearl spoke angrily and spitefully and I had the feeling that she felt hurt and upset. Mother said, "You can put on which shoes you want to, but don't fight with me". Pearl put on her shoes and went outside.

Mother said that Pearl was angry and unhappy most of the time and that she wanted to ask me what to do about it. She said that the following day she had an appointment with the Health Visitor to get a night bell as Pearl was still bed wetting. Pearl, who was standing by the door, heard Mother. She came back in and asked what a night bell was. Mother told her that it was adult's conversation and that she should not interfere. Pearl went outside and I felt that she was painfully hurt.

Ann, who was throwing her ball in the grass, came in and asked me to come and play with her. I said I would come and play with both her and Pearl for a short time and then I would have to go. Mother suggested that they both play catch with me. Pearl said I should throw the ball to her and she would throw it to Ann, who would throw it back to me. She said that each time one of us did not catch the ball we would have to continue the game kneeling. We played with the ball for a couple of minutes and then I said I would have to go. Pearl told me that they were going to Kenya earlier than they had planned, on the 28th of June. As she spoke she was in tears. Mother said from the living room that she would try to arrange with me a time to say goodbye to Pearl if that was what Pearl wanted. Pearl said she did.

As I was about to go, Father came to shake my hand, apologising that he had to work. He and both the girls followed me to the door.

### Observation 17 - 9.6.92

When I arrived, Mother was outside with the gardener and his dog. She told me that Ann was inside waiting for me and that the first thing Ann had said when she woke up was, "Uncle Doctor is coming today".

I went to the kitchen where Ann was sitting at the table, colouring some shapes on a piece of paper. I sat on my usual chair opposite her. As I came in and said hello Ann said, "I was waiting for you, Uncle Doctor". She went on colouring the shapes, telling me she was making patterns. She then scribbled a shape of a square with lines coming out and said that it was a house. Mother came back and sat next to Ann. As Ann was colouring, Mother noticed a scratch on her cheek. She touched the scratch, looking at it closely. Ann pushed Mother's hand away, saying she didn't want Mother to touch it. They repeated a similar sequence and Mother said to me that she wanted to check that it wasn't ringworm. Ann said that a boy in the play group had scratched her. Mother asked her when it had happened and Ann answered, "last week". Mother laughed, saying that she had not gone there the previous week, and said that Ann did not like rough boys. Ann said that she wanted to do the dots lesson. Mother said that she would wash the dishes and then she would do it with her. Ann said, "I want to do the lesson with Uncle Doctor, not with you". Mother laughed and said, "O.K., do it with Uncle then". Mother stood up and said that she would wash the dishes. Ann resorted to baby talk and held Mother, saying that she did not want her to go away. Mother said that she was not going away and that she was staying in the kitchen. Ann held her, asking her not to go. Mother said that she was just going to do the washing. Ann said "O.K." and Mother went over to the sink.

Ann made dots and counted them as she made them. Then she counted 17 dots which she said were for Father, 7 dots were for Mother, 4 dots were for Pearl and 2 dots were for Ann.

Mother returned to the table and said that it was time for a writing lesson. Ann said she did not want to learn but to play. Mother said, "Just write a few A's for apple and a few A's for Ann, and then you can play". Ann said that she did not want to learn, that she wanted to play, adding, "You always make me learn, mummy". Mother laughed, saying that she had learnt that from Pearl. Mother said, "Just write a few A's and then go and play". Ann wrote a few A's and walked away from the table. Mother asked her what she wanted to play with. Ann said that she wanted to play "Connect" with Uncle Doctor. She brought the game and put it on the sofa. Mother said, "Uncle can sit on the floor". Ann said, "Uncle is too big to sit on the floor". Mother laughed and said that big people sat on the floor as well and that it would be difficult to stand the game on the sofa. Ann said, "But Uncle has a bad back". I said that my back was much better and that I could sit on the floor. Ann put the game on the floor and I moved to sit next to her. Ann separated the red tokens from the yellow tokens, giving me the yellow pile. She put a red token on a row and I put a yellow one on the next row. She said that I was not allowed to put my yellow on her red. She then put her red on my yellow, saying that only she could do it but I could not put my yellows on her reds. She filled all her tokens in the rows, declaring that she was the winner. We played in the same way for twelve to fifteen minutes. As we played, Mother gave me a cup of coffee and sat on the floor next to us with her coffee. As soon as she sat down Ann wanted to have coffee as well. Mother brought her a mug with milk and a little coffee. Ann said that we had finished playing and she would bring another game. Mother said that she had to tidy up before she brought another game. Ann said that she didn't want to tidy up, adding, "You always make me". Mother said, "If you don't put it in its place, Uncle will not play with you". Ann said, "Uncle will play with me". I said, "You should put it in its place as mummy said" and Ann went and put the game in the box. Mother told me that Ann had learnt that behaviour from Pearl. She said that whereas Ann was just testing how far she could push her, Pearl constantly created a full confrontation, ending up fighting her. Ann returned and sat by Mother. Mother said that in three weeks time they were going to Kenya. Turning to Ann she said, "You will miss Uncle". Ann said "yes" and then said

that she wanted Uncle to come with her. She went to sit on Mother's lap. Mother said that Uncle cannot come with them because he has his own family and work. Mother then said that they would go on a big aeroplane with other people and toilets and that they would get food from a woman called an air stewardess.

Mother noticed that Ann was looking at the dog in the garden and she asked her whether she wanted to stroke it. Ann said she did and went outside to the dog. She stood three or four feet away from the dog but did not go closer. Mother said that Ann was afraid of it. Mother said that Pearl had asked if I would come and say goodbye to her before they go to Kenya. I said I would come the weekend before they go. Ann returned, saying she did not like the dirt on her feet.

It was time to stop. Ann followed me to the door, with Mother. Ann said, "Don't go, Uncle" as I left.

#### Observation 18 - 16.6.92

Mother opened the door and invited me in. Ann sat in her place at the table in the kitchen. I said hello and she returned my greeting. I too sat at my usual place, and Mother sat at hers. Ann had a small blackboard in front of her and she held a chalk in her hand. Mother marked a dot and then Ann drew a triangle with the dot at its head. She then added to it a square and said that it was a house. Mother took Ann's hand and drew a door with a circle for a handle, saying "And this is the door with the handle". Mother then added a chimney with smoke coming out. She said, "And this is a chimney, and what is coming out of it?" Ann said, "A snake". Mother laughed and said, "It looks like a snake but it is smoke". Ann said, "Smoke". Mother then took Ann's hand and added two squares, saying they were windows. Ann rubbed off the windows and drew two circles, saying that she wanted rounded windows. Mother said, "Write an A next to the house - A for Ann". Ann said she did not know how to write an A. Mother took Ann's hand and wrote A. Ann then tried to write an A but it was two parallel lines which she linked, and it looked like an H. Mother marked a dot and told Ann to draw the two lines



coming out of the dot like a triangle. Ann followed the instruction and then managed to write A.

Mother then told Ann to draw a tree. She drew the trunk - two parallel lines - and then added a rounded zig zag line which she called a snake. It came out of the side of the tree and Mother then drew it above the trunk. Ann asked Mother to draw a little girl.

Mother drew it and Ann added a "snake coming out of her hair". She then said that the lines that came out of the hair were green and yellow smoke. Mother asked her why she had smoke coming out of the hair. Ann said, "because the girl is sad". Ann wanted Mother to draw Uncle Doctor. Mother drew a face. Ann rubbed off the drawings and asked me to draw a little girl. I drew a figure and Ann added to it the "green and yellow smoke" saying that the girl was sad. Mother said that Ann had been sad for the last few days. She said that Ann wanted to have everything exactly the same as Pearl, and if she could not she cried.

Ann said that there was a dead porcupine in the road outside and she wanted me to come and see it. Mother said that she could show it to me later on when they go to play group. Ann said to me, "Uncle Doctor, play doctors with me". She went to the box by the T.V. and said that she could not find the doctor's set. Mother pointed to where it was and she brought it to the table. Standing next to me she said that she would be the doctor and I would be the child. She showed me a dot of dried blood on her finger and said that she had hurt herself. She then said that she would be the child and I would be the doctor. She took a thermometer and pushed it inside her shirt. Mother said that next week would be the last observation as on Sunday they would be going to Kenya. She asked when would be the best time for me to come and say goodbye to Pearl and we decided that Saturday would suit both of us.

Ann went to the toy piano and started to play it. Mother said that Ann had the right finger movements. Ann said that she would play "twinkle, twinkle, little star" and she wanted both Mother and me to sing. She played the piano and we sang. Ann looked at us as we sang and laughed. She then twice repeated a similar sequence with "baa baa black sheep", again laughing at our singing. Ann said that she would sing about a red

balloon. She played the piano and spoke gibberish as she played. Mother laughed and said that Ann often made up songs and stories in this way.

Ann fetched a board game and said to me, "Play with me, Daddy". Mother laughed and said, "Is Uncle your Daddy?". Ann said, "No, he is Uncle Doctor". She paused for a few seconds and then said, "Uncle is like my Daddy". Mother said, "Both Uncle and Daddy are men". Ann said "Yes". She sat on the floor and opened the box of the game. She held the instruction page in front of her face and said, "I am the winner and you are not allowed to win". She wanted me to come and sit next to her on the floor and I joined her. She threw the dice a few times and declared, "I am the winner".

It was time to stop. Both Mother and Ann came outside with me, Ann running ahead to the dead porcupine. As I came there she said, "Why does it have hair like this?".

### 8.13 Emerging patterns

The following is a summary of the main themes as they emerged over time:

#### 8.131 Serving coffee

In all the observations except one (Observation 18. 16.6.92, pp. 113-115), Mother at some point made coffee for herself and for me and then joined Ann and me. It seems as if Mother usually brought the coffee following a sequence in which she felt excluded and displaced by the child as the one who was pairing with me. It seems that the coffee represented the adult's genitality. Bringing the coffee, Mother seems to be stressing that it was only for herself and for me, thus trying to re-establish her adult pair with me. The coffee was something that the child could not offer me, only Mother, as if she was saying, "I am the one who can satisfy you, not the girl. I can offer you something special and unique".

Thus for example: Observation 15, 26.5.92, pp. 105-107: "... Mother offered me coffee and Ann said that she wanted to make the coffee for Doctor Uncle... Mother came back with the coffee ..."

### 8.132. Playing with the doctor's set

In all the observations Ann brought the doctor's set at some point and then wanted to play it with me. Indeed, in the third observation Ann named me as Uncle Doctor and that was how she referred to me from then on throughout the period of observations.

It seems that the doctor represented the one who knows and teaches. Pairing with me as a doctor was a way to derive knowledge from a position of safety as there were no over-sexual overtones. The explorations consisted of securely inserting things such as thermometer and injection into the body of the other person. The play with these objects represented a phantasy about a healthy helpful penetration out of which one could learn what was happening in the body and the mind of the other person. Playing a doctor, the little girl seems to be practising damaging types of penetrations. Thus for example Observation 7, 31.3.92, pp. 89-91: "...Ann brought the doctor's set to the table ... She gave me the thermometer ... She gave an injection to the doll ..."

### 8.133 The fear of insects

Often in the observations Mother mentioned Ann's great fear of insects. At times, it seemed that she was approving of this fear, almost encouraging it. Ann usually responded by acknowledging Mother's comment and then developed the subject further. It seems that the fear of insects was an anxiety agreed and defined by both Ann and Mother. Usually the fear of insects was introduced by Mother following a sequence where Ann was trying to create and explore a triangular situation involving Mother, me and Ann. Mother removed herself out of these triangular situations, thus reducing it into a pair relationship.

As it emerged, the fear of insects seems to have had a function: a measure to prevent the girl from moving beyond a pre-Oedipal pair relationship. Thus for example, Observation 3, 4.3.92, pp. 84-86: "... Mother told me that Ann was afraid of insects ... Ann said that she was afraid of ants ... Mother said that Ann could notice ants from a long distance". (See as well Observation 7, 31.3.92, pp. 89-91, Observation 8, 7.4.92, pp. 91-93, and Observation 14, 19.5.92, pp. 102-104).

## 8.2 DISCUSSION: ANN

### 8.21 Variable Grid

Subject: Mother	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Ann</p> <p>Name of Mother: Shanti</p> <p>Single Mother: No</p>	<p>1: Loneliness</p> <p>2: Material deprivation</p> <p>3: Low self-esteem</p> <p>4: Lack of emotional support</p> <p>5: Child replacing partner</p> <p>6: Signs of depression</p> <p>7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history</p> <p>8: Supportive network of friends</p> <p>9: Educational level</p> <p>10: Nationality / ethnicity</p>	<p>Some degree, due to father's being around so little, and her own loss of professional occupation</p> <p>No – high standard of living</p> <p>Sometimes low – mainly in relation to loss of professional identity</p> <p>No – but often feeling unsupported in relation to oedipal rivalry of the girls</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>Not observed</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>High</p> <p>Indian family from East Africa</p>

## Variable Grid

Subject: Child	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Ann</p> <p>Name of Mother: Shanti</p> <p>Single Mother: No</p>	<p>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</p> <p>2: High level of anxiety</p> <p>3: Evidence of failure to separate</p> <p>4: Problems of gender identity</p> <p>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>No – ordinary developmental level in relation to oedipal explorations</p> <p>No – nothing measurable, but difficulty in moving from diadic to triangular relationship</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes – an older sister as an ally in the face of oedipal rivalry with mother</p>

## 8.22 The difficulty of establishing triangular relationships

The summary of the period of observations of Ann and her mother seems to be a narrative of a struggle to find satisfactory Oedipal resolutions through which both mother and daughter developed as they managed a process of transition.

Mrs S was a lively mother whose presence at home was very evident, always available for the child. Father, who worked long hours, was generally absent from home and to some extent from Mrs S's mind. It was this absence in her mind and in particular her difficulty to keep in mind the link with him as her partner that made it difficult for Mrs S to form an alive couple with me in relation to Ann. From the first contact with the family I was defined to both girls as "Uncle" and only Mother knew my name. It seems that calling me Uncle was a way of locating me in close proximity but at the same time removing my sexual aspect. Thus on the one hand my name became Mother's secret with me and on the other hand I became a "non-sexual good Uncle". It seems that Mother did not allow herself to imagine any form of relationship with me except a very restricted one; that is, a relationship where we had roles of observer and mother in relation to the task in hand, that of observing Ann. It seems that this constellation was caused by Mother's Oedipal resolutions being challenged by my presence in the family. Therefore Ann had to improvise in her mind the relationship that Mother had arrested. As Mother was so anxious about her own phantasies, she allowed the girl a somehow restricted space for growth which was disconnected from feelings and phantasy, a space that had to be completely under Mother's control.

Both Ann and Pearl were at different stages of the Oedipal phase. Ann, who was approaching three years of age, was entering into the phase where she had to move away from Mother, identifying with her while she was exploring phantasy relationships with Father. Pearl, who was about to end the Oedipal phase, seemed to have an urgent demand for a good resolution of her Oedipal anxieties so that she would be able to enter the latency phase of her development. At the Oedipal stage of development the Oedipal identifications are more demanding as they involve conflict. However, Mother could be

tolerant of pre-Oedipal identifications only, where there was no conflict between her and the girls. It seems that Mother's anxiety was that the Oedipal conflict would evoke her own unresolved Oedipal anxieties. It would appear that she pushed Pearl to identify with Father, and in relation to Ann she constantly fragmented triangular relationships both in reality and phantasy, and pushed the girl back into dyadic pre-Oedipal relationships.

Often in the observations Mother commented on how uncomfortable she felt about not working and "not using her brains" (see Observation 1, 18.2.92, pp. 77-79 and Observation 7, 31.3.92, pp. 89-91). Her message to the girls was: "You are the reason that I am stuck at home. While you develop I am stuck at home, not gaining a thing, just losing". Thus Mother did not usually communicate the pleasure of motherhood but only the loss. It seemed that giving up her professional identity in order to be a mother and a wife evoked anger in Mother. She felt that she had mutilated a large part of her identity without receiving much compensation in return. The result was that she felt lost. She lost the role of a mother and a housewife, but by staying at home she lost her role as a professional woman as well. She had a poor integration of her identity as a mother, a wife and a professional, and this taxed further her Oedipal conflicts in relation to her own parental figures (see Observation 2, 25.2.92, pp. 80-83, and the corresponding interpretations pp. 121-125).

Mother's difficulty in responding to Ann's Oedipal identifications is well demonstrated in Observation 3, 4.3.92, pp. 84-86: "(Ann, Mother and I were sitting at the table) ... Ann wrote '2' many times, each time saying 'two' ... she said that she would write '3' but could not manage to do so ... she drew a triangle, saying 'triangle'. She counted the sides of the triangle and said it had four sides. Mother said it had three sides not four. Ann counted again and said 'four'. Mother took three pencils and made a triangle with them ... Ann counted three sides and then ... added a pencil to the side of the triangle and said, 'four'. Ann said, 'One for daddy, one for mummy, one for Ann and one for Pearl' ... Ann wrote '2' but called out 'five'. Mother said that it was two, not five, and added that '5' was a difficult number to write. Mother then went to the area of the sink and offered me a cup

of coffee ... Ann drew circles, saying 'circle' each time she drew one ... Mother brought the coffee and sat on my right. Ann drew a circle and said it was a spider ... she added three lines as arms. Ann started saying 'Little Miss Muffet' and Mother completed the sentences when Ann did not remember ... Ann drew two more spiders and then said that she was afraid of spiders. Mother told me that Ann was afraid of insects ... Ann said that she was afraid of ants. Mother said that Ann could see ants from a long distance ... Ann took a book ... she turned the pages until she came to a picture of many bees. Ann said that she was afraid that they would sting her. Mother said, 'which one is the odd one out?' ... They did the same with a few more pictures. Ann came across a picture in which the task was to make pairs between different objects ... When she had finished the task she pointed at a picture of a chick and a baby pig, saying 'this is me'. Mother asked her what she would do at school and Ann replied that she would draw with blue, yellow and green crayons".

Ann wrote the number 2 several times. By doing so she appeared to be creating a couple, a pair consisting of herself and me, Mother and Ann. The pair represented a pre-Oedipal relationship. Ann made several pairs which could co-exist simultaneously. She then wanted to write the number 3 but ended making a triangle with a fourth side. It seems that the triangle represented triangular relationships. One wonders whether Ann introduced a fourth side to the triangle as she detected how difficult it was to create a triangle consisting of Ann-Yaron-Mother. It appears that the phantasy triangles that evoked anxiety in Mother were: Yaron-Mother-Father and Yaron-Ann-Mother. Ann introduced the fourth side in order to relieve the anxiety and to create a safer situation. At that point Mother appeared to be relieved and she laughed.

Ann then moved to number 5. Throughout the sequence with the numbers she seems to be checking different levels of relationships, testing out what it meant to be in a relationship of 2, 3, 4 and then 5 parties. Undoubtedly Ann had a space in her mind to develop links. When Ann wrote 5 which looked like 2 it was 5 in mirror writing. It seems that at that point she was trying to develop a new dimension of relationship, probably an image in her mind of the whole family in relation to the observer. However,



Mother did not see it and she turned the 5 into 2, thus reducing the new dimension into a pair, "you and me". It was at that point that Mother moved from the table to make coffee. By doing so, Mother seems to be saying, "5 is a too difficult notion of relationship for me to think about and to bear as it evokes too much Oedipal anxiety in me".

When Mother left the table a pair situation was re-created. This seems to be Mother's style of resolving anxiety and this was the model she offered Ann to identify with. It was at that point that Ann started drawing circles. The closed shape of the circle represented a state of unity, the opposite of separation, as if she was saying, "We're all be one in order to avoid struggling with feelings of jealousy and the pain of separation".

Mother returned to the table with the coffee and commented about Ann's good pencil control. It appears that Ann also had a very rich phantasy world. She had no fear of elaborating phantasies and she was not anxious about aggression. Mother had turned all of these into something concrete - "pencil control".

It was at the point that Mother returned to the table that Ann turned the circle into a spider. The three lines that Ann drew as arms represented the fragments of the triangle she had made earlier. She added the fragments to the circle representing unity.

When Mother completed Ann's quotation of "Little Miss Muffet", she was offering the girl a channel for development but only in the way that she herself had developed.

Ann drew two more spiders and then said that she was afraid of spiders. It seems as if the three spiders that were present on the paper replaced the triangle she had drawn earlier but at this point it was linked with fear, the fear of spiders.

When Mother began to tell me about Ann's fear of insects she seems to be approving of this fear. Thus the fear had a function: a measure to prevent Ann from moving beyond a pre-Oedipal pair relationship. Doing so, Mother was actually mapping the development of the girl. It was at that point that Ann said that she was afraid of ants. The ants appear to be a further fragmentation of the triangular relationship. Mother developed the subject further, telling me about Ann's ability to identify ants from a long distance and this seems as a further approval of Ann's fear as if it was an anxiety agreed and defined by both Ann and Mother.

Ann brought the book and opened it at the picture of the bees, saying that she was afraid of being stung. Ann appeared to have an anxiety of penetration, probably linked to the Oedipal situation. Mother reacted by asking Ann which was the odd one out. Mother seems to be removing the phantasy by shifting the focus of attention from the content to the structure. Doing so, Mother seemed to be saying to Ann, "If you have Oedipal phantasies you would be the odd one out from Mother". It was at that point that Ann created pairs, linking two objects together: ;cow and milk, chicken and chick. Mother praised her as if she was happy that again there was a situation of twosomes. Ann's reference to the chick and the baby pig as "this is me" seems to be a statement that summed it all up: "I am a baby".

From there Mother shifted the development, asking Ann what she would do at school. In doing this, Mother seems to be giving Ann a channel of development in which she was allowed to deal with the external structure of the phantasy but not with the content. However, Ann's answer that she would crayon with blue, yellow and green colours seems to indicate that she was shifting it back to a triangular situation; as if she was saying, "I am going to think with three colours".

### 8.23 The attempts to pair with "father"

In the following observations Ann indeed "thought" in three colours. In the observations Ann seemed to be trying to pair with me, developing phantasies about pairing with "father" while separating from Mother and competing with her. As part of this process she was exploring potential parts of herself such as "a big girl" or a "woman" within the context of her relationship with me. However, this process is much more complicated because on a deeper level the girl was trying to make contact with the parallel internal figures in Mother's mind. That is: internal mother, internal father and internal husband. In a state of health (as opposed to narcissism) and emotional maturity, an adult would experience his/her objects as part of the self which is beyond the control of the individual and therefore has an independent existence within the self. It is this part of the self on which one draws and relies when functioning as a parent. Because Mother's self was not

mature enough (mainly due to shaky Oedipal resolutions) she seemed to have a confusion between self and objects. When Ann challenged Mother on an Oedipal level Mother could not contain her own Oedipal anxieties and therefore she tended to use Ann's objects to contain her own anxieties. This seems to be a particular type of projection: a projection of fear, of jealousy and of envy into the girl, which then followed by an attempt to deal with it in the child.

#### 8.24 The loss of the protective mother figure and the inability to hold in mind the link with Father as an adult partner.

In the observations, when Ann tried to pair with me, pushing Mother into the position of the one who would feel excluded, I always felt that Mother was hurt as Ann pushed her out of her role. Mother in turn reacted in ways that undermined Ann's feeling, at times by retaliating (see for example Observation 7, 31.3.92, pp. 89-91, and the corresponding interpretations, pp. 132-137). The Oedipal anxieties could not be reduced because Mother was not capable of transforming anxiety into a matter which could be thought of. This resulted in an inability to pass beyond the very concrete Oedipal phantasies which were then experienced as very dangerous phantasies against which one should set rigid boundaries.

The process by which the girl is trying to push the mother aside can facilitate growth only as long as it does not damage the parents' relationship. A pre-condition for this is the mother's capacity to hold the father in her mind as her partner and hence not to feel overwhelmingly rejected. It seems that Mother found it difficult to hold Father in her mind as her adult partner. It looked as if she felt rejected and by her reactions she seemed to be saying, "I can not receive these very unpleasant feelings". The result was that Ann immediately moved to identify with me as someone whom she felt could contain these feelings. This was a second factor in making a couple with me. This aspect is emphasised by Ann defining me as "Uncle Doctor", the one who knows and can teach her.

The complexity of this situation is well demonstrated by Observation 7, 31.3.92, pp. 89-91: "... Ann fetched the doctor's set. She said that she was a doctor and Uncle was also a doctor. She then said to me, 'You are the real doctor' ... she said that the doll was unwell. She put the thermometer in the doll's mouth ... she told me to put it in my mouth. Mother told me that last week she worked for three days and Ann objected. Ann gave an injection to the doll ... Ann said that she was putting a vitamin powder on the doll ... She again took the doll's temperature. She then listened to the doll's tummy with the stethoscope ... Ann brought back a pack of cards. She said, 'Now we'll all play snap' ... Mother said she would wash the dishes and went to the sink. Ann played snap with me and after a minute or two Mother joined us ... Ann said, 'Go away, don't speak to Uncle' ... I felt she was hurt ... We started to play ... Ann said that she wanted to go to the toilet. Mother gave her her hand and said, 'Come, I'll take you to the toilet'. Ann said, 'not to the garden'. Ann reached the stairs but then came back saying that there was a ghost there. Mother hugged and kissed her and then said, 'go away ghost'".

In the kitchen Mother seemed to establish the group situation by sitting on her "adult chair" at the head of the table. However, Ann pushed her aside elegantly by saying, "Uncle and I are Doctors". She then made a further differentiation, "You are the real Doctor", defining the situation as a space in which a phantasy could be explored via play. In a way Ann seems to be saying to Mother, "I want to make a couple with Uncle and you should get lost". Mother laughed and it had a defensive quality to it, laughing it away and turning the whole situation into a phantasy. It was this attitude of Mother's that did not help the child to pass beyond the concrete Oedipal phantasy.

Ann then started the game with the doll, the thermometer, and the injection. The doll seems to be a representation of Ann. The thermometer seems to be an introduction of a notion about a healthy, helpful penetration. Putting the thermometer inside the doll's mouth and "inside" my mouth she seems to be saying, "This is something we are going to share - a phantasy about a penetration from which one can learn what is happening inside the other person".

It was Mother who introduced anxiety into the situation at that point by telling me that Ann did not like it when she went to work that week. This may be interpreted as, "If I leave Ann she is not left with an image of a mother who can protect her". Within the context of Ann's play, Mother's unconscious communication was, "If I leave Ann alone while she is playing this game of inter-penetration, it is not safe and she must be afraid". The injection which Ann gave the doll represented a second form of penetration, a more violent penetration than the one of the thermometer. It is possible that the shift from the thermometer to the injection was caused by Mother saying in effect, "When I go, Ann is not left with a mother image that can protect her".

When Ann gave herself the vitamin powder she seems to be saying, "I want to give myself a pro-growth powder as Mother does not give it to me".

Throughout the Doctor sequence Ann was curious about her own body as well as Mother's trying to learn what was inside (the stethoscope, the thermometer). However, this exploration evoked anxiety and as Ann was not supported by Mother, she packed up the Doctor set and passed on to another game in the service of deriving knowledge - the cards.

Ann introduced the cards and clearly wanted Mother to take part in the game. However, Mother went to the sink, removing herself from a triangular relationship, thus refusing to take part in this way of development and of deriving knowledge. It was only when Ann had created a couple with me that Mother returned to the table. At that point Ann told Mother to go away. It seems that Mother had removed herself from being a part of an adult couple together with me in relation to her daughter as she was unable to bear the child's Oedipal curiosity and rivalry. Therefore the girl told her to go away. One's impression is that Ann knew that she was not allowed to develop her curiosity because Mother could not stand it. This inability of Mother disrupted the girl's curiosity and prevented learning. Thus Ann stopped playing and wanted to go to the toilet.

Going to the toilet seems to be a way to evacuate anxiety, perhaps in a way similar to Mother's going to the sink earlier. The anxiety appears to be evoked by the existence of a triangular situation. Mother could not be in a triangular relationship and constantly

created a couple with one person being peripheral in relation to it. This difficulty was enacted when Mother had moved to the sink and when Ann went to the toilet.

Mother seems to recover her position as an adult when she gave her hand to Ann and said that she would take her to the toilet. However, it seems that Ann was not confident that Mother would help her, and she was anxious that Mother would betray her and take her to the garden, which was perceived as a place full of persecutors - the insects. It appears that as Mother was unable to contain the Oedipal anxieties of the child without feeling frightened herself, she could not protect her daughter by allowing her to project her anxieties on to Mother. Moreover, Mother seems to project her own anxieties onto the girl and Ann's fear was not of the insects in the garden but a fear of something that was projected by Mother onto Ann. (Later on in the observation Ann had no difficulty in going out to the garden when it was linked to the window cleaner and not to Mother). As Mother did not generate a containing presence Ann seems to be saying, "You cannot help me, you just cause me to be in touch with persecutors when you push me to a level of paranoid schizoid mental organisation (Klein, 1946) in which the insects would sting me".

Ann started to make her way to the toilet but came back saying that there was a ghost there. Mother hugged her and kissed her and told the ghost to go away. The ghost, another persecutor, seems to represent the aspect of Mother which did not protect the girl. At that point Mother supplied Ann with a physical container, hugging and kissing her. Then Mother became omnipotent saying, "I will expel the ghost". In a way Mother seems to be saying, "Come and regress to a paranoid schizoid level where magic is the mode of operation, and I will expel the ghost". One's impression is that with such a powerful mother, Ann would be better off taking Mother's side rather than being a rival. It seems that being an anxious little girl was the level that Mother accepted Ann. On this level Mother became an idealised object (Klein, 1935) and as such it blocked the Oedipal anxieties of the child. (When the object is conceived as primordially good - idealised, it is a result of separating off the good aspects of the object by splitting which is then followed by denial of the bad aspects. Thus idealisation is a defence against persecutory

hostile bad objects). It seems that Mother actually pushed Ann into using pre-Oedipal mechanisms such as splitting, projective identification and idealisation. (See as well Observation 8, 7.4.92, pp. 91-93, and the corresponding interpretations, pp. 138-144).

### 8.25 If jealousy, envy and aggression are not contained, the image of a couple in the mind is demolished.

As observations proceeded, Mother's tendency to withdraw from triangular situations started to diminish. In the observations she seemed to become more competitive with the girl in relation to me. Until then I was perceived by both Mother and Ann as an observer who was there for the child. However, at that stage Mother seemed to want my attention, excluding the girl as she put herself as the object for the focus of my attention. Thus once Ann made a good contact with me, then Mother became a little girl who was competing with Ann. It was usually by engaging me in an "adult discussion" that Mother tried to come closer to me, pushing Ann aside, asking me a political question or inquiring about the interpretations of dreams (Observation 8, p. 91). When the girl responded by saying, "Uncle, listen to me, not to Mother" (Observation 8, p. 91) Mother tended to laugh. When Mother laughed she seemed to resort to a manic defence, denying the girl's anxiety. The laughter appeared to imply: "It's just a joke, I did not really exclude you". This type of communication denied the girl's pain that she had actually been pushed aside by Mother, who had tried to possess me. By using denial, Mother deprived the child of internalising a mother who can take responsibility and therefore capable of doing reparation (Klein 1929, 1940) of the relationship.

It looked as if Mother's difficulty was that she did not know how to create with me an adult couple without reducing Ann into a very little girl. When it came to Oedipal rivalry Mother found it difficult to identify with a parental figure in her mind and set adult's limits. Rather, she seemed to identify with a tyrannical child which she projected onto both girls (see for example Observation 8 and the corresponding interpretations). This complicated struggle with jealousy, envy and aggression is well demonstrated by Observation 9, 14.4.92, pp. 94-96: "I arrived late ... Mother said that she had assumed that I would come

late ... because of the I.R.A bomb ... Ann said: 'Uncle Doctor, come and play with me'.

Ann led the way to the kitchen. Ann sat on her usual chair. Mother brought a bowl of cereal to the table and tried to pick Ann up to put her on her high chair. Ann said that she was a big girl and did not want to sit on the high chair. Mother said that she might spill her food ... Ann repeated that she was a big girl ... Mother agreed that Ann should not sit on the high chair ... Mother talked about the bad traffic (due to the bomb) ... Ann wanted to play dominoes ... she gave the three of us a piece each. She stopped dealing the dominoes and said, 'Mummy will not play. Mummy will go to work' ... Ann fetched the Doctor's set ... As Ann took my blood pressure, Mother asked me about the difference between envy and jealousy. I said that envy was a feeling in the context of a two person relationship when one felt he/she wanted to have something the other person had. I said that jealousy involved a triangular relationship when one felt excluded and tried to possess the loved person ... Ann shouted at me to play with her and not talk to Mother. She then said that she would put cream on my hands and on my back ... Ann hit me gently and repeatedly over my chest. Mother laughed, saying that Ann felt at home with me ... Ann picked up a ball which she threw to the further end of the room ... Mother commented that throwing the ball to stop us talking was jealousy, not envy ... Ann joined a few pieces of Duplo together ... She tried to stand on her head on the sofa ... She lay on the sofa and said that Uncle Doctor was ka-ka. Mother said that Ann was really angry and jealous. It was time to stop and I said so. Ann said, 'Father goes to his office to make a lot of ka-ka' ... As we started walking to the door Ann came up running, saying 'see you next week Uncle Doctor'".

When I arrived, Mother said that she had thought that I would come late due to the I.R.A. bomb on the North Circular Road. [She seemed to be saying, "We kept you in mind; we were wondering where you were". Thus it appears that Mother was ready to create an adult couple with me.] On an unconscious level, Mother's communication may be interpreted as, "If aggression, jealousy and envy are not contained, the image of a couple in the mind is demolished". This seems to be the focus of the whole observation as well as the location of Mother in her development in relation to me.



While I still stood at the front door, Ann approached me saying, "Uncle Doctor, come and play with me". Mother reacted by saying, "Breakfast first", thus reasserting her role and authority as a mother. When Ann sat on the ordinary chair, rejecting the high chair, she seemed to re-define the situation: "I want to be like a grown up". Mother still wanted to put Ann in the high chair as if she was saying, "I find it difficult to create a couple with Yaron if you are a big girl and I therefore want you to be a little girl. Mother's explanation at that point about the dirt appears to be a rationalisation. Ann insisted on not sitting in the high chair as she was now a big girl. She seemed to be saying, "I want to be like a grown up. I want a different relationship with this man - Uncle, and I want to relate to him not only as your little girl but as a big girl as well". [Mother then agreed that Ann should use the ordinary chair presumably because she was unable to contain the Oedipal challenge in her statement. When she did agree with Ann, the child faced all this anxiety and Mother took no part in containing it by actively making decisions].

Playing dominoes seems to be a reproduction of triangular relationships. Ann dealt the Domino pieces to three people and then told Mother to go to work. It seems that when Ann included Mother she made a contact with a non-rejected pre-Oedipal mother and then followed the shift, "I want to make contact only with Uncle". Mother said that she did not want to work, probably as she sensed that there was something powerful in Ann's play which was actually an exercise in phantasing. At that point the game began and Mother gave the rules of the game, thus reasserting her authority as an adult. It is important to note that it was Ann who had decided which game she wanted to play and who would participate in it. However, once the game had started Mother introduced the rules which necessitated obedience rather than thought. This seems to reflect Mother's model as to how to become an adult: "Obey the rules and repress your phantasies".

Ann ended the game of dominoes and fetched the Doctor's set. Playing a doctor appears to be a safe way of knowing about touching a man. In the play it is possible to touch under the pretence of knowing. In order to know about touching Ann had to pretend that she was a Doctor and that I was a patient, and actually both of us pretended that she did not touch me.

Mother's question about the difference between jealousy and envy came at the point that Ann was taking my blood pressure, which was perhaps a reference to "Oedipal hot feelings". Still, Mother posed a general question rather than a specific question directed to me, such as "I read about envy and jealousy and I did not understand the difference - do you have some ideas about it?". In posing the question in such a way I had to contain the anxiety about this subject and to give a specific answer. Still, I gave a very partial answer about envy, consciously avoiding referring to the destructive component of envy. It seems that at that minute I was acting in counter identification with Mother. I became a parental figure who had to split off the destruction, probably because I sensed that there was so much envy in the situation. This envy (rather than jealousy) was inherent in Mother's attempt to keep Ann as a little pre-Oedipal girl, thus destroying Ann's development.

When Ann shouted at me not to speak to Mother she actually demonstrated the subject of my conversation with Mother. The cream Ann pretended to put on my back and on my hand seems to be a return to an early state of pre-symbolic way of organising experiences (similar to the use of the red balloon in Observation 8, 7.4.92, pp. 91-93). The cream seems to represent an adhesive state (Bick 1968, Meltzer 1975) in which I magically became part of herself. In this primitive stage of development the focus of the experience is on the sensation of the surface of the object against the skin and it appears to reflect an unconscious phantasy such as, "If you are touching and being touched you are alive". When Ann hit me gently over my chest she seems to produce a gentle rhythm of touching. Mother's comment that Ann felt at home with me suggests something like, "Ann found a safe mother 'inside your mind' who can securely organise Ann's experiences, and not inside my mind". Then Ann threw the ball, telling me to fetch it, which Mother interpreted as an expression of jealousy. On a deeper level the ball seems to represent the object she had created with me earlier while being in the adhesive state. Once she had created this object with me she threw it to the other end of the room, as if she was trying to see whether it was possible to make a link with the ball when it was away from her, that is: to separate but to be linked.

Building with the Duplo, Ann seems to reproduce an object with which one can make many links. She then went to the sofa, stood on her head, landing on her back, ending the sequence saying that Uncle Doctor was a ka-ka. Standing on her head she exposed her bottom and genitals. Ann seems to be doing a reversal of the situation in which I talked to Mother and she felt excluded. Thus she appears to be saying, "I am more exciting than Mother, my genitals are more powerful than hers". This seems to be an expression of envy rather than jealousy, trying to spoil Mother's genitals. Then came the declaration that I was a ka-ka, as if Ann was saying, "If you are in a relationship with Mother you are a ka-ka". I was transformed into a destroyed non-vital object which had to be expelled out of the body.

Mother defined Ann's feelings at that point as anger and jealousy, thus distorting the reality. Actually the girl said, "You are a ka-ka because you betrayed me". Mother's reaction appears to imply, "No you are just jealous. Jealousy is something we can all deal with, but not with envy". At that point I mentioned that it was time to stop and following my remark Ann said that Father goes to his office to make a lot of ka-ka. Taking this last sequence as a whole it looks as if Father's way, and my way at that moment as well, to deal with envy, was to carry the projections of envy out of the family. In this way an idealised couple - Mother and Ann (and Mother and Father as well) can continue existing.

As I made my way to the door Ann came up running and said, "See you next week, Uncle Doctor". Thus, not only had she recovered, she actually completed her integration of me as the man she loved and the man she hated - when I was in a relationship with Mother. However, in saying that she had thought that I would come late, Mother seemed to be saying "We kept you in mind, we were wondering where you were". Thus it appears that Mother was ready to create an adult couple with me.

3.1. It is interesting to follow closely the development of the observation from the point that Ann had put cream on my back until the end of the observation. Once Ann returned to the pre-symbolic state producing a gentle rhythm of touching in a context of a dyadic

relationship with me, she was able to get in touch with a safe mother image in my mind, who could organise her experience securely. From this position she went to play with the ball, to separate from this object but still to maintain a link with it. This was followed by a sequence of Oedipal jealousy and envy.

From this sequence it seems plausible to extrapolate the following developmental line. Once a safe relationship of mother-baby is established, the baby can make the first contact for Oedipal resolution with the father figure (internal object) in the mother's mind. This takes place in relative safety within the context of a dyadic relationship when the mother sets limits and is able to say "no" in various forms to her baby. This facilitates a gradual process of separation as it is reflected in the play with the ball. If it is possible to make this first Oedipal contact safely then there is a possibility of making a shift to a triangular relationship and a perception of the mother as a sexual mother, as it is reflected in the sequence when Ann stood on her head and the statement that Uncle Doctor is ka-ka.

#### 8.26 Does competition have to lead to destruction?

As observations proceeded it looked as if Ann felt that Mother was unable to contain the Oedipal attacks because she could not keep in her mind her link with Father as her partner. Mother seemed to experience the girls' attempt to be "big" as being robbed of her parental figures. Within this situation one felt that Mother disappeared, as if in the girls' minds she was not a resource which could support their development. Drawing an island (Observation 10, 21.7.92, p.98) Ann seemed to be saying, "I am like an island in relation to Mother. I cannot make links with her in my process of growing up". Drawing a picture of the family consisting of a giant father, a monster mother, a witch Pearl and a ghost Ann (Observation 10, p. 98), Pearl seemed to experience the family as populated by persecuting deformed bad objects. This was probably a result of the competition which was taking place between the females. In different ways both girls appeared to be saying, "If I compete with Mother she dies and if Mother competes with me I die". Thus, when Mother did not have the confidence to know that the real couple consisted of herself and Father and herself and me in the observations, competition was experienced as

necessarily leading to destruction rather than to growth (see Observation 10, pp. 97-99 and the corresponding interpretation pp. 150-152.

### 8.27 I will support you but then I will exclude you

As observations proceeded there seemed to be a shift in Mother's interactions with both girls when it came to Oedipal rivalry. Mother became more able to support the girls in their explorations via play to pair with "Uncle Father", as if she was approving of them to some extent. The difficulty was that at some point Mother became competitive and then stepped in and paired with me, excluding the girls. The Oedipal rivalry was not just between Mother and the girls, some of it was located between Pearl and Ann. This constellation is well demonstrated in Observation 15, 26.5.92, pp. 105-107: "... Ann said to me: 'Uncle Doctor, come and sit on the floor next to me'... Mother said that Ann had prepared this puzzle to show me that she could do it ... Pearl told Ann that it was a baby's puzzle and that she should do a different one ... Ann did the puzzle slowly and quietly ... once or twice when she could not fit the correct piece Mother came over and guided her gently ... She had finished the puzzle. Mother praised her saying, 'that's a good girl'. She took the puzzle to Father who said 'that's a big girl' ... Pearl came and sat by me on my left. She said she would do a puzzle ... Mother came and sat on the floor between Pearl and me, watching Pearl. Mother laughingly said that Ann was doing the first puzzle she had had as she could do that one. Mother offered me a cup of coffee and Ann said that she wanted to make the coffee for Uncle Doctor ... Mother came back with the coffee and praised Pearl saying, 'that's a big girl'. Mother told Pearl to go and get dressed. Pearl replied angrily that she did not want to. Mother said to her, 'Don't fidget with me'... Pearl went upstairs ... Mother told Pearl to put on her white shoes before she went outside. Pearl refused ... angrily and spitefully, and I had the feeling that she felt hurt and upset ... Mother told Pearl that it was adult's conversation and that she should not interfere. Pearl went outside and I felt she was painfully hurt ... Mother suggested that both girls play catch with me. Pearl said that I should throw the ball to her and she would throw it to

Ann, who would throw it back to me. She said that each time one of us did not catch the ball he/she would have to continue the game kneeling".

Ann invited me to sit next to her, as if she was saying, come and create a couple with me. At that point Mother arrived and told me that Ann had prepared the puzzle to show me how competent she was in doing it. Mother seemed to be saying that Ann wanted to create something with me, that she had the ability to produce shapes, and that she wanted to share it with me. Doing the puzzle appeared to be a safe way of producing a baby in a relationship with "Father Uncle Doctor".

As Ann was doing the puzzle, Pearl told her that it was a baby's puzzle and told her to do another puzzle. Thus Pearl seems to attack the possibility of creating something with me, as if she was saying, "A real intercourse with Father Uncle Doctor is different from the puzzle you are doing". However, Ann went on constructing the puzzle, at times guided by Mother. In guiding her daughter, Mother seems to be approving the exploration in phantasies about creating a baby with Uncle.

When Ann finished constructing the puzzle she was praised by Mother: "good girl" and by Father: "big girl". These two images seem to have different meaning. A good girl appears to be a girl whose genital functioning is not too much on display and therefore she is good. Thus Mother seems to "clean" Ann from the sexuality. "Big girl" is the girl that Father approves of, including the sexual links she makes in her phantasy. As Pearl realised that Ann was more successful than she had predicted (Father's approval), she decided to do a puzzle as well, and she came to sit on my left.

Mother then came to sit between Pearl and myself, probably as she had felt excluded. Both Mother and Pearl seem jealous of the little girl who was capable of making contact with "Father Uncle Doctor". Their jealousy brought them close to me, probably in order to displace Ann. Mother then told me that Ann was "cheating" - she was well prepared in constructing that puzzle. It was as if she was saying, "I am the one who can satisfy you, not Ann". At that point she offered me a cup of coffee as if she was saying, "The things that I can offer are unique and special; the things that the girls offer you are of no

value". This might have been the reason that Ann wanted to make the coffee with Mother.

When Mother returned with the coffee she praised Pearl's puzzle, "That's a big girl". The coffee seemed to represent the adults' genitality and at that point she was able to praise Pearl as if she was saying, "I reluctantly recognise your sexuality but you are not yet able to compete with my genitals".

At that point in the observation Ann seems to be displaced. And then Mother appears to move and deal with Pearl, who was told to go and get dressed. When Pearl refused to do so Mother said, "Don't fidget with me". This seems to imply, "I have the authority and the power, don't play with me". The whole struggle seems to be, "Who would be with Uncle Doctor". Mother's reactions indicate how anxious she was when the girls were practising pairing with Father in their phantasy. It looks as if Mother enabled the girls to begin this exploration but she then "castrated" them by getting rid of them. In this context, "Don't fidget with me" seems to mean not only, "Don't make me angry" but "don't move your body".

Ann was outside, Pearl was about to go outside, and one wonders whether Mother was not trying to displace both girls again, in a similar vein to that enacted in the sequence with the coffee and the pyjamas. Mother then turned to Pearl, telling her to put on her white shoes before she went outside. Mother seemed to be saying to Pearl, "You are not the big girl you think you are". In this respect the white represents virginity (as opposed to sexuality), which Mother wanted to see in Pearl. On top of it, Pearl would have probably felt incompetent had she dirtied the white shoes while playing in the garden. Throughout the sequence with the shoes Mother seems to humiliate her rival in public, which was why I felt that Pearl was so hurt.

The catching game that Pearl had designed: me throwing the ball to Pearl, Pearl throwing it to Ann, and Ann to me, seems to be significant. Unconsciously it appears to mean: I enter into Pearl, but not into Ann. Pearl becomes part of myself and she then enters into Ann. Ann in turn would enter into me and find inside me a "good mother" whereas Pearl would find a "good father" inside me.

Pearl's idea that the one who would not catch the ball would continue playing on his/her knees seems to mean: "The one who does not catch the link with Father would be humiliated". This appears to reflect Pearl's experience of what Mother was doing to her. That is: "If you don't grow up the way I want you to develop I will humiliate you; I will present you in public as a silly, powerless girl".

#### 8.28 I can trust my link with you, I don't feel that I need to compete

As we entered the last quarter of the period of observations, the new emerging capacity of Mother to support Ann in her development, approving of the girl's explorations in her relationship with me, continued developing. In the observations one felt an attempt to complete a stage in the Oedipal work before we end the observations and the family went to Kenya to visit the paternal and maternal grandparents. A new quality to the relationships seemed to emerge in the observations. When Ann was pairing with me in play, the element of trying to exclude Mother began to diminish. Mother began to leave a bigger space for Ann to pair with me and she did not seem to feel hurt or to have the need to compete. This process of the growing space left by Mother was well summed up in the last observation (Observation 20, 23..6.92, pp. 118-119). When Mother went to Pearl's school, leaving me to babysit Ann for twenty minutes, as if it was a kind of ceremony in which the little girl entered adulthood, it looked as if Mother had begun to create a strong link with me as an adult partner and therefore she felt less anxious that the girl would damage the couple relationship if she was in a state of Oedipal rivalry. This new constellation is well demonstrated by Observation 17, 9.6.92, pp. 110-112: "When I arrived Mother was outside ... she said that Ann was inside, waiting for me ... In the kitchen Ann was sitting at the table colouring some shapes ... Ann said, 'I was waiting for you Uncle Doctor'. She went on colouring, telling me that she was making patterns. She then scribbled ... and said that it was a house ... Mother noticed a scratch on Ann's cheek ... Ann pushed Mother's hand away saying she did not want Mother to touch it ... Ann said that a boy in the play group had scratched her ... Mother asked her when it had happened ... Mother laughed, saying that she had not gone there the previous week ...



Ann said that she wanted to do the dots lesson. Mother said that she would wash the dishes and then she would do it with Ann. Ann said, 'I want to do the lesson with Uncle Doctor, not with you'. Mother laughed and said, 'do it with Uncle then'. Mother stood up ... Ann resorted to baby talk and held Mother, saying that she did not want her to go away ... Mother said that she was just going to do the washing up ... Ann made dots and counted them ... 17 dots for Father, 7 dots for Mother, 4 dots for Pearl and 2 dots for Ann ... Mother returned and said that it was time for a writing lesson ... Ann said that she did not want to learn ... 'you always make me learn, mummy' ... Ann said that she wanted to play 'Connect' with Uncle Doctor ... Ann said that I was not allowed to put my yellow (tokens) on her red ones. She then put her red token on my yellow, saying that only she could do it but I could not put my yellows on her reds ... She declared that she was the winner ... While we were playing Mother gave me a cup of coffee and sat with her coffee on the floor next to us. As soon as Mother sat down Ann wanted to have coffee as well ... Mother brought her a mug with milk and a little coffee ... Mother said that Ann had to tidy up before she fetched another game. Ann refused ... Mother said, 'If you don't put it in its place, Uncle will not play with you'. Ann said, 'Uncle will play with me'. I said, 'You should put it in its place as Mummy said' ... Mother told me that Ann had learnt that behaviour from Pearl ... ending up fighting her".

When I arrived, Mother who was outside, told me to go inside, adding that Ann was waiting for me. Whereas in the past Mother always supervised my relationship with her daughter, probably because she had some anxiety as to whether it was sexually safe or not, this time Mother seems to imply that I could be trusted. Added to that, she did not feel that she had to compete with the child for space with me.

As I went to the kitchen, Ann was sitting at the table making patterns, and she told me that she was waiting for me. I had apparently arrived at a situation where Ann had already had a place in it. She was able to sit and wait for me and feel safe, as if she was saying, "I have integration and I can wait". The patterns she was drawing appear to represent constant conjunctions: "I can find a stable relationship". The house that she

drew seems to represent a space she felt she had. Telling me that it was a house, she seems to invite me to see this space which she occupied.

Mother came back to the kitchen and she noticed a scratch on Ann's cheek. It would appear that this very noticeable scratch was a "public scratch" which everyone could see, and especially I had to see it. At that point Mother went from looking at the scratch to touching it. Touching seems to be a more primitive way of knowing than looking. It was the touching of the scratch that Ann rejected. The scratch seems to represent the impossibility of having an exclusive relationship with "Father" and in the sequence as a whole Ann was saying: "I wear the scratch on my face but I don't want Mother to rub my face with it".

Mother wanted to check that the scratch was not ring worm and Ann said that a boy had scratched her. The boy seems to represent a contact with a male which had left the girl damaged with a wound. This points towards a damaging, exciting sexual contact.

Mother was very concrete and she wanted to know when it had happened. When Mother realised that it could not have happened she relaxed, as if she was saying, "All this sexual contact could not have happened, it is a phantasy. If it is only a phantasy I can laugh it away". Thus Mother actually denied Ann's internal reality. She checked that there had been no "incest" and then denied Ann's internal reality. It was as if she was saying that the internal world did not exist. At that point Ann wanted to play dots; ; that is, to elaborate phantasies in order to protect the phantasy that Mother had just denied. Mother, on the other hand, wanted to wash the dishes and this might represent her wish to wash the scratch from the sexual damage; as if she was saying, "I am washing the dirty phantasies. After I wash them away, you will play it the way I do". However, Ann made it very clear that she wanted to play with Uncle, not with Mother. Mother agreed to this willingly and, unlike similar events in the past, I did not feel that she was in any way hurt by this rejection. Thus, when Mother went to the sink she seems to be saying, "It is safe for you to play with Uncle and in reality nothing will happen". This attitude of Mother's seems to be in accordance with my feeling at the beginning of the observation when she felt that it was safe to let me be with her daughter and that she did not find it necessary to

compete. It was at that point that Ann started to speak in a baby's intonation and she asked Mother not to leave. Thus, once Mother had a strong link with me as her partner, then she could allow the child to explore things in her relationship with me without the anxiety that the girl would destroy the couple's relationship. Given this position, it was possible for the child to desire "father" without being too anxious that she would destroy the couple relationship. The baby's intonation seems to indicate that Ann had managed to find Mother as a pre-Oedipal object (and this can take place only if Mother had found her own link to the couple in her mind). Thus, once Ann felt that she could not damage Mother's strong link with me, she became a baby and she did not want Mother to go away. In the past Ann seemed to feel that to succeed she had to dismiss Mother in her phantasies and this evoked intense anxieties in her. By becoming a baby Ann seems to be saying: "I want to play with 'father' but I can do so only if Mother is present there as a protective figure", that is, as a pre-Oedipal object.

Making dots and counting 17 for daddy, 7 for mummy, 4 for Pearl and 2 for Ann, the girl seems to be redefining the spatial relationships in the family. The numbers probably defined spaces and Ann having number 2 might have meant that she was in a relationship with someone. Number 17 consists of 1 - a representation of a masculine element and 7 - a representation of a feminine element. Allocating 17 for Father and 7 for Mother seems to indicate a recognition of the special link between the parents.

Mother wanted Ann to do some writing but Ann insisted that she wanted to play, complaining that Mother forced her to learn. Thus Ann seems to be saying, "I don't want to know about frustrations; I want to play and you, Mummy, always delay my gratifications and make me learn".

Ann fetched the "Connect" game, which she wanted to play with me. The game seems to represent a phantasy about making a contact by filling up spaces, probably a representation of an intercourse. When Ann introduced the rule that I was not allowed to put my red tokens on top of her yellow tokens but she was allowed to put her tokens on top of mine, she seems to be saying, "You are not allowed to make love to me, that would be very frightening, but I am allowed to make love to you". She quickly filled up

the spaces, declaring that she was the winner, as if she felt that once she had lost to the parental couple and it was impossible to shift father from the couple he made with mother, then she had to win some substitute. While I was playing with Ann, Mother brought coffee for herself and me, thus marking her special relationship with me. Once the uniqueness of Mother's relationship with me was recognised by Ann, then Mother was able to respond to her request to have coffee as well.

When Ann refused to tidy up, Mother approached me for my support, saying that I would not play until she tidied up. This perhaps sums up the new emerging constellation - Mother felt confident enough that the "real" couple relationship was between her and me and not between Ann and me. She then told me how both girls fought her, actually implying that the girls were testing out her capacity to maintain her link with Father.

#### 8.29 I can support you in mourning your loss

Once Mother had become able to experience the real couple as consisting of her relationship with me, it was possible for Mother to take adult responsibility in supporting the girl in mourning the loss of the phantasy that she would have an exclusive relationship with Father, as well as mourning the loss of Uncle Doctor as observations draw to an end. It was the protective, pre-Oedipal mother that the girl had found in Mother that enabled Ann to process these feelings of loss, and to incorporate in her mind that object which she had lost. This state of resolution is well demonstrated by Observation 18, 16.6.92, pp. 113-115: "Mother opened the door ... Ann sat in her place at the table in the kitchen ... Mother marked a dot and then Ann drew a triangle with the dot as its head. She added to it a square and said that it was a house ... Mother said: 'Write an A - A for Ann'. Ann said she did not know how to write an A ... Mother marked a dot and told Ann to draw the two lines coming out of the dot, like a triangle ... Mother told Ann to draw a tree ... Ann asked Mother to draw a little girl ... Mother asked why the girl had smoke coming out of her hair. Ann said: 'Because the girl is sad' ... Ann wanted Mother to draw Uncle Doctor ... Ann rubbed off the drawings and asked me to draw a little girl ... Mother said that Ann had been sad for the last few days ... Ann said

that there was a dead hedgehog outside ... Ann said to me: 'Uncle Doctor, play doctors with me' ... she said she could not find the doctor's set ... She took a thermometer and pushed it inside her shirt ... Ann said that she would play 'twinkle, twinkle, little star' and she wanted both Mother and me to sing ... Ann looked at us as we sang, and she laughed ... Ann said that she would sing about a red balloon. She played the piano and spoke gibberish as she played ... She fetched a board game and said to me: 'Play with me, Daddy'.

Throughout the observation Ann was making contact with me as an external object, demonstrating how she was mourning the loss of "Uncle Doctor" as she was about to go to Kenya. On another level the mourning seems to be linked to the stage of Oedipal resolution at which she was.

In most of the observations it was Ann who had opened the front door for me. This time Mother opened the door whereas Ann was waiting in the kitchen. Thus she was taking adult responsibility, containing the girl's sadness throughout the observation.

Drawing on the board Ann was demonstrating how she was using symbols in order to create space between herself and her object. It was Mother who started the whole operation this time by making a dot, thus helping the girl to make a beginning. Ann developed the dot into a triangle and then added a square, making it into a house.

Mother then took Ann's hand and added a door with a handle and a chimney with smoke.

The house seems to be a representation of the body and the door represented the entrance into the self, perhaps standing for a vagina. Ann called the smoke a "snake".

The snake probably represented a penis, which had to be projected out of the internal space. Mother called it "smoke" and thus she was integrating the "snake" into the house.

Mother then added two squares as windows which Ann turned into rounded windows.

The windows seem to represent breasts and this was linked to the house as a

representation of the body. Then Mother told Ann to write an A. The A seems to be a

graphic description of the feminine and masculine elements converging at one point. This

was the thing that Ann could not do and Mother taught her how to do it. This seems to

correspond to the integration of the "snake-smoke" into the house-self.

Mother then told Ann to draw a tree. The erected tree seems to be again a secure representation of a masculine element in contact with "mother earth". Again Ann referred to it as a "snake" and again Mother completed it to look like a proper tree. The sequence is similar to the sequence with the chimney.

At Ann's request, Mother drew a little girl and Ann added to it what she called a snake. She then called it "smoke", using the words that Mother had given to it. In doing so, Ann seems to be saying, "How can I integrate a masculine element?" She said that the girl was sad and one may assume that the girl was angry as well but the anger had been split off and projected. It seems as if the girl was sad because she was about to lose me. It was at that point that Ann asked Mother to draw Uncle Doctor. She then rubbed off the picture, probably because she was angry, as if she was saying, "I cannot remember you because I am angry". Ann then wanted me to draw a little girl, as if she was saying, "How will you remember me?". She added the smoke coming out of the girl's hair, thus saying, "Remember that I am sad and angry at losing you". It was at that point that Mother said that Ann had been sad during the last few days, and then Ann told me about the dead hedgehog outside. Referring to the dead hedgehog she seems to be saying, "I am sad and angry because there is a dead object in my space and I want you to see it. This is a part of yourself which is dead inside me".

Ann wanted me to play doctors with her but for the first time since the observations had begun she could not find the doctor's set. She then showed me the spot of blood on her finger, a concrete representation of being hurt. She wanted me to be the one who would cure this pain of loss. Putting into her shirt the doctor's tool, the thermometer, Ann seems to incorporate me, and that was what she had probably attempted to do earlier with the "smoke-snake".

Asking mother and me to sing, Ann seems to want to create a parental couple making love via music. She probably laughed because she was happy that it had worked and she managed to put together the parental couple.

The red balloon she had mentioned seems to represent an early infantile state when there is a non-verbal communication between mother and baby. Speaking gibberish, Ann

seems to be creating private verbal symbols that were not part of the community's shared symbols. Usually it is the father who brings the meaning in a form of verbal symbols into the non-verbal communication of the mother and the baby. When the father names the experience the child can then separate from it. Faced with the end of the observations, Ann seems to feel that there was no father who would fulfil this function for her and she was doing it herself with the gibberish. Then came the shift to "Father, play with me". I was the father who brought words to her experiences, in my mind, naming the difficult feelings in the struggles I had been observing throughout the months of observations.

### 8.30 Summary: Ann

We can follow the struggle of both mother and girl to arrive at stable oedipal resolutions.

At the beginning there was an evident difficulty in establishing triangular relationships

These psychological factors play a role:-

(1) A shaky oedipal resolution within the mother that drove her to fragment triangular situations and to push the girl to diadic relationships.

(2) The mother's difficulty in keeping her link with her husband (and the observer) as her adult partner.

(3) The mother had lost her sense of professional identity.

Once the mother cooperated in the formation of triangular relationships and started competing with the girl the central difficulty appeared to be that the mother did not know how to create an adult couple without entering into conflict with Ann.

As the mother became better at keeping the link with her partner in mind she stopped competing with the girl. The child was then able to desire father without being too anxious, and could then make a link with the mother as a protective per-oedipal figure.

This in turn enabled the girl to mourn the phantasy that she would have an exclusive relationship with father, to process these feelings of loss and to incorporate the object she had lost.

**Within the wider social context we can point to the following:–**

- (1) The father was absent from home to a considerable extent.**
- (2) Both parents were living away from their own parents.**
- (3) There was some tension deriving from the disjunction between the surrounding Western culture and their inherited Indian culture.**
- (4) The change in the mother's position, from being a professional woman to being a mother and housewife.**



**CHAPTER NINE**

**RUBI**

## **CHAPTER NINE: RUBI**

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## **9.1 RESULTS: RUBI**

### **9.11 The initial contact and family background**

I was put in touch with Batya and Simon by the worker in the Israeli nursery where both their children attended. Three days after I had approached the nursery worker he phoned me and said that he had found a family who was willing to be observed. He said that he had told Batya that I was an Israeli child psychotherapist undertaking research about children of single mothers and that I was looking for a two-parent Israeli family with a boy between two and three years old, as part of my comparison group. He said that Batya was very casual in responding to my request, saying that it would be fine with her to have an observer coming, that it might even be interesting for her and that she was confident that her husband would not mind either.

When I phoned Batya she immediately recognised my name saying that Jack, the nursery worker, told her that I would phone her. She jokingly commented that she had already inquired about me in her net of Israeli acquaintances and her conclusion was that it was acceptable for her to have me as an observer. She mentioned the names of a few people who knew me to whom she had talked and said that she had met my wife and my son at a birthday party of a friend we had in common. She then enquired about the place in Israel that I came from and asked whether I knew various people she knew. She asked whether I planned to go back to live in Israel when I would have finished my studies. When I replied that my intention was to return to live in Israel, she said that although it was quite clear to her that she was permanently living in London, she felt torn about it. She started talking about her difficulties in addressing the identity issues of her children, saying that they clearly felt Israeli but wondered what meaning it had to be an Israeli who had been born in London and was living there.

Throughout our long and friendly conversation, Batya did not ask about my research and I mentioned it only towards the end of the conversation, asking whether she would like some information about it. She said that she understood that I wanted to observe a boy in a two-parent Israeli family in order to compare with an Israeli single-parent family that I

had previously observed. She said that from her point of view it was not necessary to know more as she did not understand research anyway. She told me that her sister had been a single mother for a while and she then commented that she was very doubtful whether the children of single mothers were in any way different from those of two-parent families.

When I remarked that it sounded as if she had made up her mind to accept me as an observer on the basis of her inquiries about me, Batya said that it was more important for her who I was and what kind of person I was rather than the purpose of my research. She added that she was confident that the children would enjoy my presence. We then discussed possible times for observations and decided that Saturdays at 10 am. would suit us both. We decided that I would come the following Saturday.

The family lives in an affluent area in North London. In front of their Victorian house, which had been renovated, there is a private car parking area where the family cars are parked, a new Jaguar and a Convertible Mercedes. The front door to the house has a closed circuit T.V. security system. The family occupy the ground floor and there are tenants living on the first and second floors. The entrance door to the flat is striking. It is a very tall door made of solid oak which reaches to the ceiling. Both door and door frame are rounded in shape, which reminds one of Gaudi's architectural features. The door opens by the press of a button on the electrical lock inside the flat.

The flat consists of four large bedrooms, a large living room and very large kitchen-dining room. The high ceilings and marble floors in the entrance hall and in the kitchen create a feeling of a cold space. These large spaces unfold into each other, thus creating a feeling of an unbounded space inside which one feels somewhat lost. The flat was designed by one of the world's foremost designers, and pictures of parts of it appear in designer magazines. There are stairs leading down a level from the entrance hall to the kitchen. Part of the kitchen is a working area with metallic green-grey kitchen units, work top and fridge. There are some spaces underneath the work top covered by round nirosta metal sheets. The rounded nirosta reflects its surroundings like a mirror, but the rounded features distort the images. Near that work area there is a support pole which had been

wrapped with nirosta metal sheets. The pole is the gravity centre of a sculpture/table made of nirosta. There are three chairs on one side of this table/sculpture where the children often have their breakfast. The three chairs have modern features and were created by the same designer. The far end of the kitchen is a dining and sitting area. Two of the walls overlooking the large garden are made of glass. Along the front glass wall there is a long, low radiator, five inches above the floor. Next to it there is a large glass dining room table. Next to the dining table there is a sitting area consisting of a leather sofa and a few cushions on the floor. The dining area unfolds into a sports room behind the sitting area. In the sports room there are different instruments for weight lifting and a large snooker table.

The living room consists of two leather sofas, each along a different wall. There are a T.V., video and stereo in one corner. There are a few leather cushions on the floor and a hammock along the glass wall overlooking the garden. The children's room is next to the living room. There is a sitting corner with two armchairs by the window and a solid, high bunk bed next to it. There is a ladder to the top bed and a slide from the top bed to the floor. Along the wall next to the bunk bed there are wooden shelves supported on scaffolding poles, where there are toys and some books. Along the wall opposite the bed there is a desk where the children draw, and next to it is a bicycle, a tricycle, an electric motorcycle operating on a battery and a toy oven. In the entrance hall, stairs lead up half a level to the parents' bedroom and on the far right side of the entrance hall there are stairs leading to the au pair's and grandmother's rooms.

There are two telephone lines in the flat with two telephones in the kitchen and two in the living room. Also, there are two mobile telephones, one for each parent.

[See diagram of flat, Appendix pp. 270-271]

The large unbounded space, the table/sculpture, hammock, telephones, slide and scaffolding shelves all contribute to create a feeling of the flat as a large playground for adults (rather than for children). One's impression is that the family was taken over by the flat, and that the flat has become the main protagonist. Within this large area it was difficult to observe and to get a picture of the mental space in the family, as the scene

always involved movement of the children in and out of spaces. Though the design of the flat and some of its furniture was strikingly impressive, often in the observations Batya implied that it was not a part of her internal reality, that it was the magazines that appreciated it and therefore she linked herself to it. One's impression is that both parents and especially the children had to fit themselves to the elegant design of the flat, as if they were all part of the mind of someone else, the designer (see Observations 2 and 3, pp. 169-176, and the corresponding interpretation, pp. 226-236).

From my first contact with Batya and Simon and throughout the six months of observations I always felt myself to be a welcome visitor. Father often invited me to join him for a coffee before or after I observed the children and on these occasions he used to share with me news about his business, and about Israeli politics. It was news about the children and her difficulties with them that Batya shared with me. At times the parents were competing with the children for my attention, saying "You have been with the children long enough, come and join the adults for a coffee before you go" (Observation 22, 15.2.92, p. 222). It was especially Mother who made a strong link with me and it appeared that her loneliness brought her closer to me, as I was interested in her and in the children. Father, who was constantly on the move for new business ventures, was not often available for his wife and his children. Even when he was at home he was preoccupied with things outside the family, talking on the telephone, reading the three Israeli newspapers which he bought every Saturday morning, going to play football or to meet male friends. Except for those holidays when the complete family went to Israel, Batya did not join Simon on his holidays, as he refused to take the children. Batya often seemed to be angry with Simon, at times almost hating him for not being available for the family. She was lonely and lost and her unhappiness interfered with her capacity to function as an adult.

Both parents were born and grew up in Israel. Simon's parents came to Israel in the early fifties from Eastern Europe. Batya's parents came to Israel from Morocco in the early fifties as well. She is the youngest child in a family of eight siblings. The family observe

Jewish traditions, they keep the kitchen kosher and celebrate the Jewish holy days, as well as Friday night kiddush.

Simon came to London twelve years ago, and within this period has established himself financially as a self-made millionaire.

Batya and Simon have been together as a couple since they were adolescents. They separated when Simon came to London at the age of 23 and Batya was 21, as she refused to live in London. Six years later Batya joined Simon and they got married. They have two boys: Gill, who was four years and three months old at the beginning of the period of observations, and Rubi, who was twenty months old at that time. Batya has not been working since the children were born. Prior to the birth of Gill she was working as a manager of a hotel that Simon owns. Neither parent continued their education beyond the Israeli equivalent of "A" levels. Batya is thirty three years old. She is an attractive woman of medium height. She has dark hair, brown eyes and a rounded, nice-looking face. She comes across as lively, warm and pleasant.

Simon is thirty five years old. He is tall, athletically built, handsome. He has brown curly hair and brown eyes, and in interacting with him, the fact that he is intelligent is very evident.

Gill has brown hair, brown large eyes, and is tall and thin for his age. He appears to be a thoughtful and contained boy who likes to occupy himself in drawing and with imaginative games rather than muscular activity. Rubi is different. He has a stocky, solid body. He has curly hair, a round face and lively brown eyes. He is quick and is constantly moving, running rather than walking. He appears to be a masculine little boy. Unlike Gill, who is cautious in his explorations, Rubi takes risks, making contact with a harsher reality in his play.



## 9.12 A summary of a sample of observations

The following is a summary of a sample of observations:

### Observation 2 - 28.9.91

Simon opened the door and invited me into the kitchen. Batya was there speaking on the telephone, dressed in a gown. Simon sat on the sofa and I sat at the dining table, on which there were still the Shabbat candles, the Kiddush wine, and the Sidur - the prayer book: all the remnants of the Friday night Kiddush.

As soon as I sat down Gill arrived and invited me to see his house under the stairs leading into the kitchen. There was a blanket on the floor and two lunch boxes. He told me that the purple box was his and the red box belonged to Rubi. There was a toy butterfly on the blanket which he said was his. Rubi arrived, running. He took the butterfly and ran to the dining table. Simon was lying on the sofa reading Israeli newspapers (which he always went to buy as soon as he got up on a Saturday morning). I returned to the dining table and sat on a chair close to the sofa. Gill came and lay on the sofa next to Father. Rubi, who was standing next to the sofa, climbed with the butterfly and sat on Father. Father told him that the butterfly was for hanging on the wall, not for playing with, and told him to put it in his room. Gill took the butterfly, brought it to me to show it to me, and said "butterfly". He then ran with it around the room for a few seconds and continued to run to his room.

Batya, who had gone to her bedroom, came back dressed and asked Simon and me if we would like some coffee. Simon said that he was about to go and play football and that he would take Gill with him. He told Gill to go and get dressed but Gill kept lying next to Father on the sofa, looking calmly around. Batya came with coffee and cake. She sat at the head of the table facing the sofa. Simon said that he would not have any cake as he wanted to keep to his diet. He said that he would like to go out and asked Batya to dress Gill. Batya told him to do it himself as she did not want her coffee to get cold. They argued about it for a while. Batya then said to Simon, "As you dress the children every

day, on a Saturday you deserve a break and I'll dress him" and she stood up and took Gill, who had been following the argument, to his room.

Simon started to tell me about a friend of his who had moved to Israel but had left after eleven months as he felt he could not survive it. He went on to tell me how he was cheated over the hotel flat he had bought in Tel-Aviv. The telephone rang and he went to answer it.

Batya came back with Gill, who was dressed and was holding a loaf of plastic bread. She sat on the sofa and Gill stood by her. Rubi came up running, snatched the bread from Gill who did not resist and came over to me with it. He showed me the bread, saying "bread" and then ran with it to his room. Batya told me that Gill's new nursery was very messy but that he was very happy there. She said that she herself found the dirt very difficult but Gill was undoubtedly happy. She said that when she took him to nursery every morning he said goodbye and turned to his own things, not needing her. She asked Gill whether he enjoyed the nursery and he smiled as he said that he did. She compared the new nursery with the nursery which Gill had attended previously and said that everything there had been clean and tidy but there had been no fun. Gill used to come back home as clean as he had left in the morning.

I wondered what Rubi was doing and went to his room. He was not there, nor was he in the living room. I returned to the kitchen and sat at the same place. Batya said that Rubi wandered around running all the time, and turned to Gill, asking him "right?". Gill smiled and said that Rubi was constantly running. Batya said to Gill, "You were not like him" and she then told me that: "Gill always needs eye contact with me, even now". Gill smiled and acknowledged it to me. Mother said that Ruby could not separate from her in nursery and he cried until he was put in Gill's group and only then calmed down. She said that he was running all over the flat during the day and at night he came to their bed three or four times, asking for a drink of water.

Rubi arrived running at the top of the stairs waving a screw driver that he was holding, and then disappeared, again running.

Batya suggested that we move into the living room. We moved there and Gill sat next to Batya on the sofa, on her left. I sat on the sofa on the right hand side. She said that soon Simon and Gill would go. She went on to say that Simon refused to take both children at the same time as once he was not in control of what was happening he felt pressurised. She added that he refused to change Rubi's nappy and he therefore did not want to take him. Turning to Gill, she told me that he had started to speak when he was six months old. "I read stories to him since he was two months old and he seemed to listen to them". Gill smiled and she went on to say that whereas Gill spoke fluently at eighteen months, Rubi speaks a few words only; on the other hand, he had much better co-ordination than Gill had at that age.

All this time Gill was listening very closely and I felt he was a partner to the conversation. Rubi came in and closed the door to the living room. He went to sit on the rocking horse. Gill told me that the horse was hard and unpleasant to sit on. Simon called Gill from the hall. Gill said goodbye to us and went to Simon. Rubi ran after them and reached the door as they closed it. He stood by the door, crying, and then ran to Mother. Mother hugged him, sitting him on her lap, and said, "You could not believe that they did not take you, and rightly so!". Rubi continued to cry as he said "Gill" a few times. After a minute or two he calmed down but then started to cry again, saying "daddy, daddy" and again "Gill, Gill". Mother said to him that he really felt offended and added, "rightly so". She said that she would take him to the park instead. Rubi said "No, want car".

It was time to stop.

### Observation 3 - 5.10.91

The au pair opened the door. I went into the kitchen where Batya, Gill and Rubi were sitting at the nirrosta table eating breakfast. Rubi and Gill sat next to each other. Simon was lying on the sofa reading Israeli newspapers. I stood in front of the table and said hello. Batya smiled and Simon waved but the children did not answer. Batya told them to say hello and they both did. Gill showed me his toast, saying it had cheese on it, and Rubi imitated him. Batya noticed that I was looking closely at the table and told me that

it had been designed by R.A. (a well-known designer). She said that he designed it as a sculpture rather than a table and that she had wanted him to change it. He refused to change it, blaming them for behaving like Arab Sheiks. Finally they had to have another designer to change it. She went on to tell me that there had been a few articles written about their kitchen in some design magazines. As she talked, the children ate silently, and she made me some coffee. I took my coffee and sat in my usual chair at the dining table. As I sat down, Simon started telling me about the son of the person who had repaired the T.V. for him, who had not been going to school for eighteen months. Gill went over to Simon as he was speaking and lay next to him, once in a while looking at me and then back at the ceiling.

Batya went and sat on the sofa as well. When Simon had finished his story she asked me whether I found that children of single mothers were different from children in two-parent families. I said that I thought that they were not different but that there were particular areas that they found more difficult to work through. Gill sat back at the table next to Rubi and continued to eat. Rubi came to me, showing me his toast, saying "cheese" and went back to the table to eat. He repeated this a few times. As he came with his toast he pointed at my coat which was on the chair and said "daddy". Batya asked him whether it was a coat similar to daddy's coat and Rubi said "yes". He pointed again at my coat, saying "mummy" and Batya said that, "Mummy doesn't have a coat like that".

As Batya and Simon went on telling me about the T.V. engineer's son, Rubi fetched a drawing board with some drawings on it from the corner of the room. He moved the board from the wall on the right side to the centre of the room. Batya told him not to make so much noise and to put it back by the wall. Rubi returned to the table and continued to eat. After a minute Gill came to me with a piece of toast, which he swallowed, saying that he had finished eating, and went to his room. He returned with a toy dog. He told me it was "Spot" and lay on his back on the cushion, holding the dog above his face and looking at it.

Batya told me that her sister had been a single mother until she had married when her son was a year old.

Rubi arrived and tried to snatch the dog from Gill, who would not let go of it. Rubi started to scream. Batya said, "Enough with snatching", and to me she said that they had started snatching things from each other during the last few days. She said that before that it had not happened. I asked her whose dog it was and she told me that everything belonged to both of them and that they shared all their toys, adding, "There is no such thing as mine or yours". She said that when one of them was playing with a toy then the other one was not allowed to take it and had to wait. Reflecting on her comment, she said that Gill had a wallet and a key holder which was his only. Rubi, who had let go of the dog, ran to the table and came back with a piece of toast. He showed it to me, ate it and ran to his room.

Batya said that Gill was shocked when he saw children in his nursery standing on the table singing - it was strictly forbidden in his former nursery. She mentioned how much the staff in the new nursery thought about the children.

Rubi came back with a few wet baby wipes, which he rolled together to form a ball. Batya commented that that seemed to be a new game which the boys had recently developed - cleaning toys with baby wipes and wrapping toys in them. Rubi took a wipe and started to clean the floor with it. After two or three minutes he pushed a wipe inside Mother's shoe which was on the floor. Gill moved to the Nearosta table and started drawing them. After a short time, Rubi joined him. Batya and Simon were gossiping about an Israeli woman neighbour whose photograph they had seen in one of the Israeli newspapers.

Gill took his drawing to show to his father, saying that it was the chains of the tank. Rubi followed him, showing his drawing to Father - "a strawberry". Batya said that he drew with pink and that everything pink Rubi called a strawberry. Gill went to his room. Rubi stood by Mother waving his drawing and saying "flag of Israel". Everyone laughed and Father came to Rubi and kissed him. Rubi ran to the drawing board and pinned his drawing there, as if he was presenting it.

Gill came back with a stone which he put on the dining table. He went to the Nearosta table and started drawing there. Rubi picked up the stone and started knocking on the

table with it. Batya stopped him, telling him that it was glass and that it would break. She gave Rubi the stone and asked him to put it back in his room. Gill came over and took the stone.

Rubi lay on his back on the cushion, looking at the ceiling with a thoughtful expression. He noticed that I was observing him and he narrowed his eyes, winking at me, and then laughed. Batya said that Rubi was a funny child and that he had a sense of humour. Rubi went to his room. Gill came back holding two twenty pence coins. Gill pushed the coins under the cushions of the sofa. He told me it was a machine - "You put in coins and the machine turns it into paper and it draws on the papers". He said that he gave the drawings to Batya and Simon. The telephone rang and Simon went to answer it. Gill went on playing with the machine and tried to push the coins into the cushion. Batya told him it was ruining the cushion and told him not to do it.

It was time to stop.

#### Observation 4 - 12.10.91

The au pair opened the door. Batya called to me from the kitchen. In the kitchen I saw Gill standing on a chair by the work top and eating a cake from the tray. Grandmother sat on the sofa reading the prayer book. I went over to her and said "Shabbat Shalom". I went to the Nearosta table and Batya, who had been washing the dishes, gave me a cup of coffee and some cake. I stood by the table.

Batya told me that she had woken up four times during the night as Rubi had vomited. She told me that Simon was abroad on business.

Rubi came out of the living room, running. He stopped at the top of the stairs, looked at me, smiled and ran to his room.

Gill finished eating the cake and went to his room. Batya talked again about Rubi vomiting, saying that it was good he had refused to eat before he went to sleep. Batya asked me whether I wanted to go to see the children in their room and we went there.

Gill sat by the window listening to a story that the au pair was reading to him. Rubi was standing by the shelves looking at a paper butterfly which he was holding. Batya

suggested that we sat at the drawing table. Rubi sat on the floor and covered his face with the butterfly. He uncovered his face, looked around the room and again covered his face. He repeated this sequence for two or three minutes.

Rubi went to the two-wheel bicycle by the wall next to the desk. He sat on the bicycle and blew its horn. Gill, who was listening to the story, went over to Rubi. He stood in front of the bicycle, holding it. Batya told me it was Gill's bicycle, and pointing at a tricycle next to it, she told me that that belonged to Rubi. Rubi pointed at the tricycle and said "pram". Batya laughed and said to him, "Don't offend your bicycle". Gill said that his bicycle was a motor cycle and Rubi's was a bicycle. Rubi repeated the word "motorcycle". Gill told Rubi to get off his bicycle and started pushing him. Batya went to Gill, hugged him and told him to let Rubi ride his bicycle as he was anyway listening to the story.

Batya told me that they had a problem in deciding what belonged to whom because Rubi had "inherited" many things from Gill. Pointing at two cars which were on the floor, she said that the red car belonged to Gill and the white car belonged to Rubi. Gill said that both cars belonged to him. Batya said that was not true and that he had chosen the red one but as Rubi was not interested in his car, Gill could play with both of them.

Meanwhile Rubi was sitting on the bicycle, pushing his body forward and thus moving the bicycle.

Gill went back to the au pair who continued reading the story. As he sat next to her listening, he was touching his penis and after a minute she told him to go to the toilet. Gill walked until he reached Batya and then said that he did not want to go to the toilet as he did not want to wash his hands. Mother suggested that he clean his hands with a wet cloth. Gill said that he did not want to go. Batya took his hand and walked with him out of the room. At that moment Rubi fell off the bicycle and started to cry. Mother came back, hugged him until he stopped crying, and then put him again on the bicycle. Meanwhile Gill went back to the au pair, who continued reading the story to him. Mother sat next to me and said, "If he does not want to go to the toilet why should I force him?". Rubi was sitting on the bicycle, pushing it forward with his body movements.

The story was over and Gill came to the drawing table, saying that he wanted to draw. Batya suggested that she and I should move to the armchairs by the window. The au pair sat next to Gill, watching him as he drew. Meanwhile Batya was praising the new nursery, saying that Gill, who had stopped drawing while attending the former nursery, had started to draw again.

Rubi went and climbed on the upper bed. Gill said that it was his bed. Batya remarked that recently they had started fighting over what belonged to whom. Rubi tried to sit on the slide but did not manage to turn himself to face the room although he struggled to do so. Batya asked him if he wanted help but he said "no". He finally managed to turn himself and he slid down. He got to the floor, laughing, and climbed again ready to slide down, laughing as he did so. Batya said, "This boy is a clown" and Rubi, who was on the top bed, smiled at her. He slid down and fetched a teddy bear from the shelves. He sat the teddy bear on the slide and slid it down for a while. He then went to the drawing table and said that he wanted to draw. The au pair gave him a piece of paper and he sat down to draw.

Meanwhile Batya went on telling me how wonderful the new nursery was.

Gill came to us with his drawing, saying that it was grass on which a huge piece of ice had fallen from the sky. The ice had an engine and it could be driven. Rubi came over with his drawing which was a scribble in brown. He said that he had drawn in yellow.

Rubi went back to draw. Gill took some bricks and said that he would build a missile that would fly. He built something which looked like a tower and put the box of bricks on top of it. He asked Mother to make sure that the box did not fall. Rubi left the table and knocked down the "missile". Gill hit him on his face and pushed him and Rubi fell to the floor, crying. Mother came to him, picked him up and hugged him, and shouted at Gill, saying that she would not allow him to hit Rubi in this way. She sat with Rubi in the armchair. Gill built the same structure again. Rubi, who was sitting with Mother, stretched his hand to pick up a toy fork from a box of cutlery on the floor. He played with the fork as if he was feeding himself and Mother. Mother told me that Simon had bought the cutlery as he liked pretending to feed the boys. Rubi put his head on the side



support, hitting it with the fork as if it was a drum. He then "fed" Mother again. He went to the structure that Gill had finished building and knocked it down again. Gill hit him and Rubi started crying. Batya shouted at Gill and then told Rubi not to destroy it again. She hugged Rubi and when he calmed down she told Gill to apologise. Gill said, "forgive me" as he was building his missile. Mother said, "Not that way, look at him when you ask his forgiveness". Gill did as he was told. Mother, still holding Rubi, knelt on the floor and gave Gill a brick which he took and built with. She then gave a brick to Rubi and told him where to put it. Again she gave a brick to Gill and in this way the three of them built a new missile. She asked Gill if he wanted to fly it and then picked the missile, lifting it up and then throwing it up. The bricks fell to the floor and both children laughed. They repeated the whole sequence a few times. At some point Gill went to the toilet and then Rubi tried, and managed without help, to build a similar structure. It was time to stop. They said goodbye to me as they went on building.

#### Observation 6 - 26.10.91

The au pair opened the door. Gill came up to me, running, telling me that Father had gone to buy the newspapers and Mother was in bed. He invited me into his room and showed me a book with pictures of amphibian cars. He told me that the cars were boats as well and showed me the different pictures.

I heard voices coming from the kitchen and said I would go and say hello. I went to the kitchen and found Simon talking to the au pair. Simon laughingly told me that Gill had lied to me when he told me he had gone to buy the newspapers because he wanted me to be with him. Simon sat on the sofa and started to talk to me about the peace talks in Madrid. Gill arrived and said that he did not hear Simon returning with the newspapers. Rubi arrived running. He said hello and smiling and pointing at the Nearosta table, he said to me, "cake?". Gill wanted a slice and Simon gave it to him. He sat at the table and ate it. Rubi came and sat next to him. As he sat there Rubi looked at me, smiling. Rubi took the cake and broke a piece off it. Gill told him not to ruin it and he called Simon, telling him to cut a slice for Rubi. Simon gave him a piece of cake on a plate. Rubi

started to scream and then held the slice, pushing the plate away. They both sat and ate. Simon was reading the newspapers on the sofa. Each time that he read some interesting news he read it out aloud for me.

Batya arrived, offered me some coffee and cake, and made one for herself as well. I joined the children and sat opposite them at the Nearosta table. Batya brought over the coffee and cake and sat to the left of Gill. She told me that Rubi had cried when she left him in nursery during the week. However, she was told that once she had left he had settled down and talked to and played with the other children. She said that since Rubi had recovered and had gone back to nursery, his speech had developed significantly. She said that at home he had stopped clinging to her and that he had begun to occupy himself on his own.

Gill had finished eating his cake and he went to the window overlooking the garden. Rubi immediately joined him there. Gill started to walk on the radiator from one end to the other, back and forth, and Rubi joined him, walking behind him. They did this for three or four minutes.

Gill discovered a dead fly on the floor and went close up to look at it. Rubi joined him. Gill announced that there was a dead fly and Rubi repeated it. Gill went to his mother and asked for a tissue with which to pick up the dead fly and throw it in the rubbish bin. Meanwhile Rubi pushed the fly on the floor with his finger. Then Rubi held the fly with two fingers and looked around for a few seconds. He took the fly to the centre of the room and put it on the floor. Batya came back to the room with a tissue which she gave to Gill. He covered the fly with the tissue then stretched his hand to pick it up, but then pulled it back. He asked Batya if the fly was dead or alive. Batya said it was dead and turning to me she said that Gill was afraid of insects whereas Rubi had no fear of them. Rubi picked up the tissue but the fly fell out. Rubi picked up the fly with his fingers and stood up. Batya told him to throw it in the rubbish bin. Rubi ran to the bin, Gill lifted the lid and Rubi dropped the fly into the bin. Gill started to run around the dining table and Rubi joined him. After a while Gill started to run from the table to the fridge, back

and forth, and Rubi joined him. Then Gill started to walk on the radiator and Rubi joined him. This whole sequence lasted some nine or ten minutes.

Batya commented that Gill and Rubi had very different personalities. She said that Gill was more anxious than Rubi, who had no fear of insects whatsoever. She wondered to what extent it was a result of Rubi being a second child as she as a parent had fewer anxieties and more experience of being a mother with him. Simon, who was lying on the sofa reading the newspapers, commented that Rubi did not know enough about things and that when he grew up and learnt more about different kinds of insects, those that could sting and those that could not, then he too might be afraid of insects.

Rubi went to his room. Gill went to Simon and lay next to him, hugging him. Rubi came back holding a guitar. He sat on the floor at the bottom of the stairs and played the guitar. He put the guitar on the floor and looked at it. He then played the guitar as it lay on the floor. Once in a while he stopped playing, observed the guitar for a few seconds, looked at me, smiling, and then continued to play the guitar. After a few minutes he went to his room, leaving the guitar on the floor. He returned holding a foam football. He kicked the ball, running after it and kicking again.

It was time to stop. The boys and Batya followed me to the door.

### Observation 8 - 9.11.91

Paula opened the door. I said hello to Gill who was watching T.V. in the living room and I went into the kitchen. Rubi and Grandmother were sitting on the sofa. I sat at the end of the dining table which still had the remains of the Friday night ceremony on it. Next to Grandmother on the floor there was a pile of recipes and a picture of each dish. Grandmother picked a page and Rubi named the food and then the other objects in the picture. Each thing that he named Grandmother repeated after him. They did this for nine or ten minutes longer. Gill arrived and stood next to Rubi. As they looked at a picture of some food, Gill said it was vegetables and Rubi added "lettuce and tomatoes". Batya arrived, said hello, and said that she would wash up before she joined us with coffee.

Gill sat on the floor by the sofa and said to Rubi, "Let's do rolling competition". Rubi sat next to Gill and both of them turned around as they sat on their bottoms. Gill stopped rotating and, smiling, said that the building was collapsing. He went on turning himself around and after a while repeated that the building was collapsing. Batya, who was by the sink, said, "It's not that the building is collapsing but you feel that it is because you have made yourself giddy by turning yourself around so much".

Gill went to the work top, held it with his hands, and swung for a while. Meanwhile Rubi and Grandmother started to look again at the pictures of the food. Gill called Rubi and said, "Rubi, gymnastics". Rubi ran to the work top and started to swing next to Gill. Gill released his hands and landed on his bottom. He crawled under the work top and looked at his reflection on the Nearosta wall. Rubi joined him and looked at their reflections. Rubi knocked on the Nearosta wall and said, "bum-bum", which Gill repeated. Rubi hung himself by his hand and started to swing. Gill followed him. Again Gill landed and went underneath the work top. Rubi joined him and they repeated a similar sequence with the Nearosta mirror.

Gill went to join Grandmother on the sofa. Rubi stayed under the work top looking at the Nearosta mirror. As he looked at his reflection Rubi said "Mother" and pointed at his reflection. He then said "Rubi" and again pointed at his reflection. Rubi went to the sink and said to Batya who was still washing up the dishes, "Drink". Batya asked him if he wanted juice and Rubi said that he wanted cereal. Batya gave him some cereal with milk and he sat at the Nearosta table. Batya brought coffee and cake for herself and me and sat next to Rubi at the table.

As Rubi was eating with a spoon he spilled some milk on his shirt and said "wet". Batya laughed and said "never mind". After eating some cereal Rubi picked up the bowl and drank all the milk, leaving the cereal in the bowl. He put the bowl on the table and announced "I've finished".

He left the table and ran to the fridge. Standing by the fridge he said "ice-cream". Paula gave him some ice-cream and he ran with it to the window by the sofa where Gill and Grandmother were looking at pictures of toys in a catalogue. He looked outside at the

garden and said "bird" and then said that he wanted to go out. Mother told him to put his coat on first. He ran to his room and came back carrying his coat. Mother helped him to put it on and he went out. As soon as he went out the bird flew away. He looked around for a few seconds. He picked up a toy spade and knocked with it on the window. He moved along the window and knocked on it with the spade as he moved along, looking into the room and laughing as he knocked. He came back inside after a few minutes and, going to Mother, he pointed at the sky and said, "the bird flew deep". Batya explained that Rubi had not yet differentiated between deep and high. It was time to stop. Batya followed me to the door as Rubi joined Gill and Grandmother on the sofa.

#### Observation 12 - 7.12.91

Rubi opened the door, saying "cake, cake". I asked him whether he was offering me a cake and he said, "chocolate cake". I looked into the living room and I saw Gill watching a video in Hebrew, Simon was lying on the hammock talking on the telephone, and Batya was sitting on the sofa talking on the other telephone. I said hello and they both waved at me.

Rubi pulled my hand and led me to his room, to the armchairs by the window. He said to me "sit" and he then sat in the other armchair. He pointed at one of two clowns that were on a shelf by the window and said "clown". He pointed at the buttons of the clown and said "buttons". He took the second clown and, pointing at a pattern on its trousers, he said "ka-ka". He said to me "coffee" and fetched a tea set from the shelves. He gave me a cup and took one for himself and said "coffee". He gave me a plate and said "toast". I took the plate and agreed that it was toast. Rubi said to me, "hot". He took the plate from me, ran to the toy oven and put the plate inside it. He stood by the oven for a minute or two and took out the plate. He came to give me the plate and said "toast, hot". He repeated this sequence for about ten minutes. As he was serving me the hot toast Batya arrived. Rubi said to her, "No, go out". Batya said, "O.K., O.K.", and went towards the door. I said to Rubi, "I think that we can invite Mother to join us". Rubi said "good"

and Batya, who had followed this exchange, came back and sat on the armchair next to mine. She asked how we were doing and I told her that Rubi was serving us hot toast. Rubi repeated the same sequence with the toast, serving it once to Batya and then once to me. He went on doing this for another five minutes. Batya said that she was exhausted as Rubi had woken up five times each time and then finally woke up at 6.30 am. and woke up everyone.

Rubi ran to the shelves and brought a water pistol, saying "water". Batya said that he could not play with water inside the house. Rubi put it back by the shelves and went on serving Batya and me with "hot toast and a cup of coffee". Meanwhile Batya went on telling me that after such a night she was so angry with him in the morning that she did not want to see him. She said she did not know how to cope with it. Turning to Rubi she asked him, "Why did you wake up so many times? When will you stop it? I cannot take it any longer". Rubi served us a few more rounds of toast and coffee and then ran out of the room. Batya went on talking about Rubi's sleeping and said that a friend had advised her to make a chart and give Rubi stars for nights when he didn't wake her up. She said that she would try but that she did not believe that it would work.

Batya went to the kitchen to make coffee. I went into the living room where Simon was still lying in the hammock reading the papers. Rubi lay next to him, looking at pictures in a book. As I entered, Rubi said "No, go out". Batya shouted from the kitchen that "go out" and "that's mine" was a new thing that had started that week.

I went into the kitchen where Batya was making coffee and Gill was sitting with Grandmother at the dining table, both of them eating cereal. I stood by the Nearosta table. Batya said that that week Rubi had started with "my food, my car, my grandmother, etc." She went on to talk about the recent events in the nursery. Rubi came running, asking for crisps. He went to the dining table and joined Gill and Grandmother, sitting next to Gill. He looked at Grandmother and smiled at her. Batya gave a bag of crisps to Rubi and one to Gill. Gill went to sit on the sofa and Rubi joined him. They tried to open their bag of crisps but couldn't do it. Gill went to the sink and fetched a knife. With the knife he opened Rubi's bag and then his bag. They both sat

on the sofa eating their crisps. After a minute or two Grandmother left the table and joined them, sitting between them.

It was time to stop. I went to collect my coat from the boys' room and Batya followed me. As I was putting my coat on, Rubi came and said "no". He then closed the door, staying in the entrance hall. I opened the door and Rubi stood there smiling at me. Both Rubi and Batya followed me to the door.

#### Observation 14 - 21.12.91

Gill and Rubi opened the door. Rubi started shouting, "Yaron, Yaron, Yaron is here". Gill told him not to wake Mother up and to me he said that she was asleep and that Father was talking on the telephone. He turned around, hit his head on the door handle, started to cry and ran to his parents' bedroom

Rubi ran to his room and fetched a toy drill. He pushed it into my hand saying, "This is for you". Still by the front door I waved at Simon in the living room. Rubi pulled at my hand, leading me to his room and saying, "Come, come, come". He sat on the floor by an old telephone. He pressed the buttons quickly and then spoke into the receiver. He spoke quickly, as if he was engaged in a very exciting conversation but I could not understand a word. He kept on speaking and pressing the buttons at the same time, for a further five minutes. I felt that he was not communicating with me but with someone else out of here and I felt a bit excluded.

Simon came into the room inviting me for coffee with him in the kitchen. Reluctantly I followed him to the kitchen, feeling that I was letting Rubi down. Rubi followed us, bringing with him the drill and the telephone. Simon made coffee and brought it over to the sofa, with a slice of cake for each of us. We sat on the sofa. Rubi ran to the work top and fetched a piece of cake for himself. Simon told him to get a plate. Rubi fetched a plate and sat between us eating his cake.

Simon was talking about the bad recession world wide. He talked about how all the people in the United States had cut their expenses drastically, including those who did not need to do so, as a matter of mentality.

Meanwhile Rubi finished his cake, ran for a while in the living room. Simon talked about his new business venture in communication services. Rubi at that point ran into the living room. Simon went on to describe how he was planning to expand his business and to go into private medical services. There was a telephone call and Simon went to answer it in the living room.

I went to see what Rubi was doing. He was in the living room watching T.V. - sport. As Simon was talking on the telephone Rubi went on watching T.V. for four or five minutes, sitting on the sofa opposite the T.V.

Mother and Gill came into the living room. She asked me when I arrived, saying that she had been asleep until a few minutes ago. Gill joined Rubi on the sofa, watching T.V. Batya said she would make coffee and she went into the kitchen. Rubi moved in front of the T.V., watching it standing there. Gill asked him to move as Rubi was blocking his vision. Rubi came back to sofa and sat next to Gill. They watched T.V. for five or six minutes. Batya arrived with her coffee. The second telephone rang and Batya took the call. After two or three minutes while she was speaking on the telephone, Gill left the living room and went to his room. Rubi joined him immediately. I waited a minute and then followed the boys.

I found them sitting on the top bed of the bunk beds. Gill held a tiger doll and Rubi had a dog doll. Gill lifted the blanket and told me that they were about to enter the cave. Gill covered both of them with the blanket. After a few seconds they came out. Gill said that they were out of the cave and, pointing at the light bulb, he said that the sun was shining. Rubi pointed at the light bulb and said "hot". Gill told me that they would go back inside the cave and that the dog and the tiger would eat the insects. They covered their heads and came out after a minute. Gill asked me to bring him his steering wheel. Rubi wanted one as well. I gave them two steering wheels from the shelves. Gill said that it was now a car. Gill asked me to give him his towing car. Rubi wanted his tractor. I gave them the car and the tractor from the box by the shelves. Gill drove his car on the blanket and Rubi followed him with the tractor.



Mother arrived and asked them what they were doing. Gill told her that the tractor and the car were inside the cave and Rubi repeated what he had said.

It was time to stop and I said so. Mother told the boys that they would not see me the following week as they would be away on a holiday. The boys said goodbye and went on playing. Batya followed me to the door.

### Observation 17 - 11.1.92

Simon opened the door, telling me that Batya had gone shopping with a friend. He said, "Come and have a coffee with me before you go and observe the children".

I went with him to the kitchen and on the way I said hello to the children, who were playing in their room with Paula.

In the kitchen, Simon introduced me to a friend of his, an Israeli politician who was visiting him. Simon made coffee and we sat and talked about Israeli politics. After about ten minutes, Rubi arrived, went to the oven, and said "chocolate cake". He went and stood on the radiator. Simon told him to go back to his room and Rubi went. I finished my coffee and said that I would go and see Rubi. I found him sitting on a cushion, watching T.V., in the living room. As I entered he said, "Ski, somersault". I sat on the sofa opposite the T.V. Rubi looked at me and said "lorry". He went on watching the sports programme and each time that someone did a somersault he mentioned it. After six or seven minutes he stood up and started to pile cushions on top of the one he had sat on. He then moved the cushions onto the sofa next to me and arranged them in a similar pile. He then struggled for a further three or four minutes to bring a big leather cushion to the sofa. He put it on the sofa and re-arranged the pile of cushions on to it. He sat on the pile and said, "lorry, rubbish lorry, driving". He sat on the pile and watched TV-ski. Once in a while as he was watching T.V., he pushed his hand under the cushion, laughed, and said, "engine", and then "rubbish lorry". After about ten minutes he pushed his hand between the mattress and the back support and said, "no hand, disappeared". He then took his hand out and laughed. He repeated this a few times. He went to the hammock and brought from there another big cushion. He added it to the pile and sat on it. He sat

there for six or seven minutes repeating the words about the rubbish lorry and ending with the hand disappearing.

He went to his room and took a white plastic container from the box by the shelves. He put the container on the floor in the centre of the room and said to me, "birthday cake". (I sat on the floor, leaning on the cupboard). He ran to me and then back to the cake and said, "disgusting cake". He took his electric Vespa and rode it around the room for three or four minutes. He then parked the Vespa by the wall with the rest of the vehicles.

Rubi ran to the toy oven and started running in the room, pushing the oven. Once every few seconds he stopped, opened the oven door, switched on the different buttons and said, "hot". Then he closed the door and went on pushing the oven. He came to the container which had been the birthday cake, put it inside the oven saying, "birthday cake". He pushed the oven, running with it to the entrance hall. He sat on the floor by the front door and put the container in and out of the oven. He finally put it back inside the oven and sat switching on the oven buttons.

Gill arrived and said that people had pumped all the water from the river, now there was no water left, only mud, and all the boats were stuck in the mud.

Rubi pushed the oven back to his room and went on pushing it in the room for another two or three minutes. He then left it in the centre of the room and rode his Vespa for three or four minutes. He returned to the oven and continued to play with it as previously for another few minutes.

[All this time, Gill was sitting with Paula by the window, playing and reading stories].

It was time to stop and I said so to Rubi. He went to join Gill and Paula. As I was putting on my coat, Rubi pointed at the sea gull hanging by string from the ceiling, and said "a screw, a screw". Paula lifted him up and Rubi pulled the string of the sea gull, which moved its wings. Rubi said, "flying".

As I left the room Rubi joined Gill and they both waved goodbye.

## Observation 22 - 15.2.92

Paula opened the door and went to the children's room. Rubi was standing at the top of the stairs leading to the parents' bedroom and said, "there is a cake in the oven". Simon came out of the bedroom, saying that they had just woken up and would be with me soon.

Rubi picked up a sword saying, "look". He hit the floor with the sword and then the walls around him. He went into the living room as he knocked with the sword on the floor and the walls. In the living room, Rubi continued to knock on the floor, the different pieces of furniture, and on all the objects in there. He did this for about fifteen minutes.

Gill arrived and said that he had built a Mercedes Castle with Paula and that they were driving it. He invited me to come and see it. After a minute or two I went in to see the castle. Paula was sitting on the floor holding a steering wheel. Gill sat on the bed, covered with a pile of blankets and a pile of pillows as a back support. He was holding a steering wheel too, and driving it.

I returned to the living room where Rubi was still knocking with his sword. Rubi got to the area by the hammock. He lay down on the hammock and pushed it with his legs, which were touching the floor. As he swung himself he said that it was a ship. He went on swinging himself, saying "I'm sailing". At times when his legs did not reach the floor and he was not able to push the hammock he said, "It's not working". He continued to play this game for another ten minutes or so.

He stood on the floor and threw a sheep skin which was in the hammock onto the floor. He pointed at the sheep skin and said that it was a fish. He stepped on the sheep skin and said again that it was a fish. He then moved around the room, throwing the sheep skin, stepping on it, and saying that it was a fish. He continued to do so for another six or seven minutes.

Gill arrived and said that Rubi was stepping on a dolphin. Rubi went to jump on the big cushions by the fireplace. Gill told me that Rubi was now jumping on a whale. Gill went back to his room.

Rubi went on jumping on the cushions and then alternating between the sheep skin and the cushions. Once in a while Rubi told me that it was a fish.

After a few minutes Rubi came to me, pulled my hand and said "come". He led me to his room. He went to the shelves and picked another sword. He said that it was a hoover and moved around as if he was hoovering with the sword. He went to their desk and picked a toy drill. He said that it was a hoover and moved it above the desk. He told me that he was screwing a screw into the table. He brought a doll from the shelves to the desk. He put the drill on the tummy, eyes, mouth and ears of the doll. I asked him what he was doing and Gill from his castle said that Rubi was checking the doll as if he was a doctor. Rubi confirmed that he was being a doctor and continued to check the doll as described. Rubi brought the oven to the desk. He put the doll inside the oven and closed the door. He said "hot" to me. He took out the doll, looked at it as if checking something, and then put it back inside. For three or four minutes he continued to put the doll in and out of the oven as described.

He fetched a small teddy bear and a medium teddy bear from the shelves. He pushed them inside the oven and for a long time struggled to close the oven door but it was impossible. Finally he left inside only the bigger teddy with the doll and closed the door. Simon and Batya came into the room. Batya said that she would make some coffee. Rubi told Father that he needed batteries for the drill. Simon gave Rubi a few batteries from the shelves and he then went to the kitchen. Rubi put the batteries in the drill but it still did not work. He took the batteries out and then put them back inside. It still did not work and Rubi told me, "The batteries are finished". Batya called out from the kitchen, "Coffee is ready. You have stayed your time with the children. Come and be with the adults before you go".

I went to the kitchen. Batya said that Rubi's speech had developed a lot and that he used it in order to compete with Gill. She said that she had taken Gill for a visit to the King Alfred School and he had enjoyed it very much, especially a lesson about the human body.

It was time to stop.

### 9.13 Emerging patterns

The following is a summary of the main themes as they emerged over time:--

#### 9.131 Father reading the Israeli newspapers

At all the observations where Father was present, without any exception, he was either lying on the sofa in the dining room or in the hammock in the living room reading three different Israeli newspapers. Being absorbed in the newspapers he was cut off from his family, unavailable for them.

#### 9.132 The nursery

Often in the observations Mother talked to me with a kind of amazement, praising the boys' new nursery. There were four features about it that she constantly mentioned: (1) how dirty the place was; (2) the freedom the children had: for instance, being permitted to stand on the tables; (3) the extent to which the nursery workers thought about the children's needs; (4) how happy the children were in the nursery. Thus for example: Observation 3, p. 175, "Batya said that Gill was shocked when he saw children standing on the table singing ... She mentioned how much the staff in the nursery thought of the children". It seems that the nursery represented for Batya a model for child development which was different from the model she had in her mind and probably different from the experience that both parents had experienced as children, but nevertheless a model she seemed to approve of.

#### 9.133 The telephone calls

As described earlier, there were two telephone lines and a number of telephones in different locations at the flat. Throughout the period of observations both parents were often talking to different people simultaneously, preoccupied with people outside the family. One's impression at those times was that the children were not in the parents' minds and that the parents were physically occupying the same space but actually had never managed to share this space with each other. Thus for example: Observation 12,

7.12.91, pp. 196-198, "Gill was watching a video ..., Simon was lying on the hammock talking on the telephone and Batya was sitting on the sofa talking on the other telephone".

#### 9.134 Batya's complaints

It seems that Batya often felt lonely and unsupported as Simon was not available for her as a partner. She often complained about it. Thus for example: Observation 16, 4.1.91, pp. 205-207, "... she complained that instead of helping her with the children he had gone out to play football". And in Observation 18, 18.1.92, pp. 211-213, "... she said that she was fed up with his being absent so frequently, adding that even when he was at home he was not really there as he was constantly on the telephone and preoccupied with his business".

## 9.2 DISCUSSION : RUBI

### 9.21 Variable Grid

Subject: Mother	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child: Rubi</p> <p>Name of Mother: Batya</p> <p>Single Mother: No</p>	<p>1: Loneliness</p> <p>2: Material deprivation</p> <p>3: Low self-esteem</p> <p>4: Lack of emotional support</p> <p>5: Child replacing partner</p> <p>6: Signs of depression</p> <p>7: Disturbances deriving from mother's family history</p> <p>8: Supportive network of friends</p> <p>9: Educational level</p> <p>10: Nationality / ethnicity</p>	<p>Yes – to some extent</p> <p>No – high standard of living</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes – partner emotionally absent</p> <p>Yes – an older child does so to some extent</p> <p>No – but signs of anger sometimes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Israeli</p>

## Variable Grid

Subject: Child	Factor	Observation
<p>Name of Child:      Rubi</p> <p>Name of Mother:    Batya</p> <p>Single Mother:      No</p>	<p>1: Adequacy of maternal emotional environment</p> <p>2: High level of anxiety</p> <p>3: Evidence of failure to separate</p> <p>4: Problems of gender identity</p> <p>5: Emotional contribution of siblings</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>No – ordinary levels related to developmental transitions</p> <p>Yes – moderate levels as evidenced in nursery and at night</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes – an older brother</p>



The six month observations of Rubi and his family seems to be a narrative of the two boys' development in the face of parents who did not fully complete their adult development. Undoubtedly there was a presence in the family of a caring mother and a potent father with whom both boys identified. The paper follows the ways in which their minds managed the transitions of development.

### 9.22 Father

As an entrepreneur, Simon was always on the move doing new things, new business ventures. This was one reason that it was difficult for him to be containing. As a self-made millionaire he was potent and powerful outside the family. Being at home he was always preoccupied with Israeli newspapers and telephone calls, constantly in contact with something outside but hardly ever in contact with his family. One felt as if he was on loan to his family. Throughout the six months of observation, not even once had I seen him playing with the children and only a very few times had I seen him engaged with his wife in a sequence of positive communication. Reading his newspapers on the sofa in the kitchen or as he was lying in the hammock in the living room it seemed that his message to his family was: "I am in this house to be seen but not to be touched by you, to make a connection with you". The boys had to make a great effort in order to make contact with Father and to identify with him. His wife was in a similar position as well (see Observation 2, 28.9.91, pp. 169-172). Reading the Israeli newspapers whenever I came to observe, I had the feeling that London and Israel were very close, a sense of a very omnipotent father who could make London and Israel into one place. This omnipotent phantasy of creating an infinite limitless space was affecting the whole family life. The feeling was that both boys and the mother were Father's guests, extensions of himself. One expression of Father's omnipotence was the parents' notion that the children did not possess any toy individually and they had to share all their toys as if they were fused in one mind, with no differentiations between them. The unbounded space of the house was another expression of it. Feeding was the game that Simon loved to play with the children. For this he bought the boys cutlery (see Observation 4, 12.10.91, pp.

177-180). The feeding play appears to be significant as it points out how much Simon wanted to be the idealised feeding mother. This was perhaps the only part of himself with which he identified. Clearly, he did not identify with adult functioning as a father. This seems to indicate that omnipotence was the dominant state of mind within which he operated, stemmed from an omnipotent identification with the breast, a part object of an idealised mother. In order to maintain the omnipotent state of mind, Simon had to project his infantile parts and his anxieties. For this the children, and to a lesser extent his wife, functioned as containers into which he evacuated.

Manipulating the external environment in the face of infantile needs and anxiety was Simon's second mode of operation in order to maintain omnipotence. Thus for example Observation 14, 21.12.91, pp. 202-204: "Simon talked to me about the difficult recession. Rubi heard the bad news and he left the kitchen. Only when Rubi was out of the room did I hear the good news: Simon's business plans for the future. Thus Father used the boy in order to contain the anxiety he had evacuated".

Control was another aspect of Simon's omnipotence. As Batya commented (Observation 2), Father had always refused to take more than one child at a time with him as he felt that he could not control the situation and he did not like to take Rubi with him as he did not want to change nappies. Thus Batya seemed to say that Simon had very little space in his mind to contain anxiety and therefore he could not bear not being in control. In this small space he could contain only one person at a time.

### 9.23 Mother and the flat

Throughout the six months of observations there was always a sense of fragmentation which made it difficult to keep in mind a process of continuity. Within the very large undifferentiated space of the flat there was constantly a feeling that people were getting lost and the children kept disappearing and then re-emerging. The space in the flat reflected the emotional space in the family.

The unbounded space was not a space that the family members shared but a space that they occupied. This reflected the need to be in a relationship of fusion rooted in the unconscious omnipotent phantasy that they all operated in one mind.

Mother was desperately trying to pin her husband down, to make a couple with him, but he was not available for her either. She seemed lost and lonely, angry, even sometimes hating Simon. As Batya felt unhappy in her relationship with Simon at times she seemed to lose her capacity to be an adult. This was reflected in her difficulty in responding to the more mature needs of the children rather than to the infantile needs and in the concrete definition of reality that she seemed to hold on to. Thus for example in Observation 3, pp. 173-176 Batya told me about the history of the kitchen and the table: the first designer had produced a sculpture and then a second designer was called in to convert it into a table. Telling me the story Batya seemed to imply: "Things here are not what they seem to be. I wanted something real, a table, and I had to get another designer in order to rescue the reality. Though I don't approve of the design, as it is not my reality, other people do appreciate it - the magazines, and I therefore link myself to it". This was a sense of reality that had been created externally by others rather than internally. Simon appeared to be the very opposite, very omnipotent, operating on a phantasy of being a powerful father who could turn London and Israel into one.

#### 9.24 The couple

Batya and Simon did not manage well at creating a couple. Neither of them kept the other one in mind, trying to understand what the other felt or wanted. Often in the observation one encountered fragmented couple links and divided parental functions which gave a sense of things being fractured. The parents did not contain each other and so they did not together contain the children (see Observation 2). In many of the observations both parents spoke on different telephones to different people for a long time. The feeling on these occasions was that, while the parents were absent, preoccupied with talking on the telephone, the children were left out. It seemed that in their mind, the parents were not with the children (see Observation 12, 7.12.91, pp. 196-

198). One's impression was that the couple was in the same space with only their bodies. They did not supply the children with a protected space. When the parents were on the telephone, the T.V. became the only object that the children were capable of sharing. It is possible for a parent in a similar situation to say to the child: "Go and play because I am going to speak on the telephone". However, Batya and Simon did not do this. The transitions were never made by the parents and the children were therefore dropped into a no-man's land. Being in this state of a vacuum they tended to watch T.V. for a while and then made the transition themselves; they went to their room to play (see Observation 14, 21.12.91, pp. 202-204, and its corresponding interpretations, pp. 255-258).

### 9.241 The child as mother's partner

Batya desperately needed to create a couple and in the absence of Father she turned to Gill. Often Batya spoke about how close to her Gill was, and then compared him to Rubi (see Observation 2 and Observation 18, pp. 211-213). It seemed that Mother needed to keep Gill close to her as she felt so lonely. Gill calmed her down; he also did the same for Rubi in the nursery as Rubi could not separate from Mother. Thus Gill fulfilled functions of Father in relation to Mother and Rubi. Rubi, on the other hand, could not separate from Mother at nursery and at night (see Observation 5, 19.10.91, pp. 181-183, and Observation 13, 14.12.91, pp. 199-201) because he was uncontained. It seems that Rubi was uncontained because: (1) he was in identification with Father, constantly on the move; (2) in the minds of the other members of the family as well, he was interchangeable with Father; (3) he had to separate and find new links with a mother who could not tolerate being left. The result of all these factors was that Rubi could not find a way to enter his own self space.

When it came to situations of the boys' Oedipal rivalry with Father, Batya joined Gill in an unhelpful way. Thus for example in Observation 3, pp. 173-176: "... Simon told me about the son of the person who repaired the T.V. for him ... As he was speaking Gill went over and lay next to Simon, once in a while looking at me and then back at the ceiling ...

Batya asked me whether I had found that children of single mothers were different ... Gill went back to the table and continued to eat ... Batya and Simon went on telling me about the T.V. engineer's son ... Gill returned with a toy dog ... and lay on the cushion, holding the dog above his face and looking at it. Batya told me that her sister was a single mother until she had married when her son was a year old". The story told by Simon may be interpreted as: "Look how a child can be kept damaged by the man who is supposed to repair things for me". The message in the story seems to be: "Not all the children can develop properly, there are children who are damaged by the parents". When Gill heard the story he went to lie next to Father, as if he was saying: "I am not your enemy, Father, don't do such a thing to me". Lying next to his father, Gill looked at the ceiling and smiled at times. One wonders whether he was preoccupied with a phantasies that up in the ceiling was the place where he was protected, with Mother, because being down on the floor involved a risk of being attacked by Father, ending up like the damaged child of the T.V. engineer if he did not behave properly. It was at the point of the above emotional constellation that Batya introduced her question about single mothers. This can be interpreted as: "What would happen if we kill Father?" Thus she joined the side of the boy in an unhelpful way rather than helping him to do some transformation of his anxiety. Gill moved to the table and eating, he seemed to be internalising a less frightening object. Both boys came over to me to show me the food that they were eating, thus asking for a confirmation or showing me that they were taking inside themselves something good.

Gill returned with the dog which he held above his face as he lay next to Father. Whereas earlier he was in the same position, looking at the ceiling, now the dog stood for a new object he had created (the internalisation via eating) instead of the hallucinated object he was observing in the ceiling earlier. It was at that moment that Batya started telling me about her sister being a single mother and then getting married. Assuming that the dog represented a paternal object with which the boy was making a link, then Batya did a reversal of the situation. She seems to be telling me that her sister and the baby had

destroyed the first father and then they created a new, second father. Thus she was implying: "The real couple is me and the boy and we chose a father".

However, Gill could not really fulfil Batya's needs as her partner and she started competing with the boys for my attention. Whereas Simon shared with me the news about Israeli politics (see Observation 6, 26.10.91, pp. 184-186), Batya shared with me the news about the children (see Observation 5, 19.10.91, pp. 181-183). It was her anxiety about Rubi and his difficulty in separating from her in the nursery and in bed at night that Batya often spoke to me. Simon was not available as a partner to contain her anxieties. He could not function as a containing adult who might tell Batya that it probably was only a temporary stage and that Rubi's difficulties would not last for ever. At other times Mother approached Rubi directly, saying "Why do you wake up at night? When will you stop it?" (see Observation 12, 7.12.91, pp. 196-198, and the corresponding interpretation, pp. 251-254), thus inviting Rubi to be the container of her feelings. The end result was that not only was Mother not able to help the boy to deal with bad feelings, she projected her own feelings on to him. Thus, for example, in Observation 2, p. 172, when Father went to play football and took Gill with him, leaving Rubi crying at home. Mother responded saying that he could not believe that they did not take him with them and rightly so, that he was really offended and rightly so. It seemed that Mother did not help the boy to transform his sadness. Instead she validated his feelings and then told him that what he felt was not sadness but rage, insult and persecution - "they attacked and offended you".

#### 9.242 Development in an unbounded space

Throughout the six months of observations both boys constantly went to their room following a pleasant experience such as being praised, eating, or producing a drawing (see Observation 3, p. 174, p. 175). It seems that once the children had a satisfying experience that they could internalise, they felt that they had to run away to the other room as if they were saying: "If I stay here I am not sure that I will be able to keep this piece of satisfaction inside me as I might have to share it or it would be spoiled". This appears to

result from: (1) the parents' notion that the children had to share all their belongings; (2) the parents' projections were a threat to the children's good experience. Simon projected his infantile needs in order to maintain his omnipotence, and Batya projected the lonely little girl part of herself. In the observations there was a constant search for idealised objects to contain them all. Growth could take place only in the area where the parents and their projections had no impact. For example in Observation 3, p. 11: "When the parents were gossiping about the neighbour, the children went to the table and drew". Thus, when the parental couple directed their projections towards a third party, then the boys could do something thoughtful and creative.

Both boys appeared unconsciously to be in touch with the deficiency in the quality of the relationships that Father allowed his family. Due to the different ages, the boys responded to it in different ways. This is well demonstrated in Observation 3, p. 175: "Both boys sat at the table drawing ... Gill took his drawing to Father saying that it was the chains of a tank ... Gill went to his room. Rubi stood by Mother waving his drawing and saying, 'flag of Israel'. The parents laughed and Father came to Rubi and kissed him ... Gill came back with a stone which he put on the dining table ... Batya stopped Rubi knocking on the table with the stone, telling him that it was glass and that it would break ... Gill came over and took the stone ... Gill came back holding two twenty pence coins. He pushed the coins under the cushions of the sofa (where Father was lying) and said: 'You put in coins and the machine turns it into paper and it draws on the paper' ... He tried to push the coins into the cushion. Batya told him it was ruining the cushion and told him not to do it". It was the chains of the tank that Gill drew that at the end of the day enables the tank to move, rather than the canon and all its phallic symbols. Showing the drawing to Father, Gill appears to be saying, "I am in touch with the thing that keeps you moving - the wish to control". He then went to his room as he was probably anxious that he might be attacked if it was discovered that he had a private source of satisfaction, his drawing.

Waving his drawing and declaring: "Flag of Israel", Rubi seems to address the heart of the matter, Father's omnipotent control. Unlike Gill, Rubi made contact with the omnipotent

idealised image of Father. He then received what he wanted - love. Once he had been kissed by Simon he exhibited his drawing publicly as a work of art. Thus he created a state of safety: "I am inside the idealisation and omnipotence of Father and he will not attack me now".

In bringing the stone, Gill seems to be saying: "My safety is different from Rubi's, this can be a weapon". The stone represented the aggressive part of the tank, which he put on the table as if saying: "Beware of me, not only Father is potent. Your structure as parents is like a glass table, it is fragile and impractical". When Gill played with the "money drawing machine", pushing coins under the cushions of the sofa, he seems to push the hard part of Father, money, into the soft part of the object. The money represented a means of entering into the object in an aggressive link, as if he was saying: "This is the link that enables me an entrance to the object as a substitute for containment".

Whereas Rubi was identifying with Father, imitating him, believing that he was making contact with him and ending up feeling "I am Father", Gill was in touch with the deficiency in the containing objects that Simon offered them, which were primarily paranoid schizoid objects. Playing with the money Gill seems to be saying: "The container on which Father sits, his idealised part, I am able to tap by money".

#### 9.243 The nursery as a different model for development

The boys' nursery, which Mother mentioned so often, telling me how wonderful it was, represented another model of children's development. In Observation 2, p. 170, Mother said, "that the new nursery was very messy but that Gill was very happy there. She said that she herself found the dirt very difficult ... She compared it to the previous nursery and said that everything there had been clean and tidy but there had been no fun". Again, in Observation 3, p.175: "Batya said that Gill was shocked when he saw children in his nursery standing on the table singing, it was strictly forbidden in his former nursery. She mentioned how well the staff in the new nursery thought of the children".

The dirt in the nursery could be seen as aggression which was well integrated. In this respect, Gill and Rubi, unlike the parents, enjoyed the nursery and its integration. In the



nursery the tables were for the children. At home the situation was the reverse, the children had to fit themselves into an elegantly designed flat, to an idealised image, a state in which it was hard to tell what was a chair, what was a table and what was a sculpture. At nursery the things were fitted for the children to use in the way they wanted to use them, rather than a bed from which the child slides down because this had been an idea in the mind of a designer. Thus at home the child became a part of someone else, but at nursery staff thought about the children. At nursery the child could exhibit his/her enjoyment of his/her experiences, standing on the table singing. But at home, the child did something satisfying and then had to run to the other room in order to keep the satisfaction inside himself, as staying with the parents created confusion as to whose satisfaction it was. Undoubtedly, the nursery was a new experience of growth for the boys.

#### 9.25 The absence of the couple's containing link as an obstacle to identification

Batya's anger with Simon imposed a difficulty for the boys' identifications with Father. She was unable to help the boys to transform the bad images of Father that they had in their minds. Her anger prevented her from receiving the boys' projections of the bad images. Especially for Rubi, who was younger than Gill, it was difficult to separate the good admired image of Father with whom he wanted to identify, from the feared and hated image of Father. The boys had to perform this splitting without Mother's support. At times one's impression was that Batya did want the boys to form a good relationship with Father.(see Observation 12 and its corresponding interpretation on pp. 251-254). The above constellation is well demonstrated by Observation 4, 12.10.91, pp. 177-180: "Gill was standing on a chair ... Batya told me that she had woken four times during the night as Rubi had vomited. She told me that Simon was abroad on business ... Rubi covered and uncovered his face with the butterfly ... Rubi went to the bicycle ... Gill, who was listening to a story, came over to Rubi ... Gill went back to the au pair who continued reading the story ... he was touching his penis ... Mother said: 'if he does not want to go to the toilet why should I force him' ... Rubi slid down from the bed. Mother said: 'this

boy is a clown' ... Gill said that he would build a missile ... Rubi knocked down the missile ... Rubi went to the structure that Gill had rebuilt and knocked it down again. Gill hit him ... Batya shouted at Gill ... The three of them built a new missile ... Mother picked up the missile, lifting it up and then throwing it in the air ...".

Father was absent and throughout the observation the boys were playing a game in which one of them would occupy Father's space. In the presence of a maternal grandmother who represents Jewish tradition, and a strong internal father, and in the face of Simon being absent, Batya is experienced as a powerful mother.

In the kitchen Gill was standing on the posh chair, which then became like the tables in the nursery on which the children were allowed to stand. This was allowed in Father's absence. Standing on the chair Gill seems to be in an identification with Father, standing on top of something and feeling powerful.

Batya told me that Rubi had woken up four times and that he had vomited. One wonders to what extent the vomiting was psychosomatic. The omnipotent object - Father - disappeared. Perhaps vomiting was a way of throwing out a bad object, bad as it was absent. Getting rid of the bad object the child would then be left with the idealised aspects of the object with which he can identify. However, because Batya was so angry with Simon, she could not receive the bad image from Rubi which may have been the reason that he had woken up four times, once for each member of the family.

When Rubi appeared at the top of the stairs, smiled, and then ran away, he probably took in the presence of a good object and he then ran away from there. Gill finished eating and went to his room. He thus incorporated something and then went to his room to assimilate it, to identify with it. Mother then suggested that we move to the children's room, where there was space for growth.

The butterfly that Rubi was playing with could have been representing Father who was here and there, every time in a different place, and Rubi was practising letting it go. Next, he went to sit on the bicycle. Thus with the butterfly he separated from Father and then he took possession of the bicycle, which represented Father. The next sequence of interaction between Mother, Gill and Rubi was negotiation as to who would get the "big

structure" - Father. Gill seems to say: "This is mine, you are the little bicycle". Mother seems to say: "Take the tricycle, identify with me and with Father, and then you are O.K.". When Rubi said no to the tricycle and called it a pram, Mother told him not to insult his tricycle. That can be interpreted as: "Don't insult my part which is inside you". When Gill named his bicycle as a motorcycle and the tricycle as a bicycle he made a differentiation: "This is Mother and this Father and they are two different things". Gill then pushed Rubi as if to say: "This powerful thing is me, not you, go away". Mother asked Gill to let Rubi ride the "motorcycle" as he was anyway listening to a story, and then came the sequence with the toy cars. Thus Mother was trying to enable Rubi to identify with Father through Gill. Then she offered Gill an alternative: "If you want to be big, go and listen to the story; this is another way to grow up". She then seems to say: "You have one car, one penis, this is enough, you don't need two". Gill returned to the story and Rubi, who was moving his body on the bicycle, seems to be saying: "This is me, I am potent, I am like Father".

Gill was touching his penis as he listened to the story. He probably had an erection as he was excited, but Mother sent him to the toilet. Thus Mother was misnaming the erection. Refusing to go to the toilet as he didn't want to wash his hands after he had urinated, Gill seems to be saying: "I don't want to build these defences around my sexuality". (Washing the hands is a defence which seems to imply: "I am clean of sexuality"). Mother suggested that he use the baby wet wipes, that is: "Treat your penis the way Mother treats things". Gill still refused to go and then Mother went with him. Thus he managed to take Mother away and this was proof that his penis was very powerful. However, as they went out of the room Rubi "fell off" the bicycle. It seems that Rubi fell off the bicycle because Gill had managed to take Mother away. Falling, Rubi seems to be saying: "My baby part is much more powerful than your penis". Indeed, Mother came back. Taking this sequence as a whole it seems that Mother found it difficult to bear Gill's erection and he was sent to the toilet as a place to get rid of the erection. Mother could not maintain a position of adult genitality and sorted out the sexual excitement by evacuation.

When Gill was drawing, Rubi slid from the top bed. Sliding appears to be similar to the body movements when he had been riding the bicycle earlier on. By sliding, Rubi seems to have an unconscious phantasy about sliding into Mother, an infantile image of an intercourse. Mother commented that Rubi was funny. Still, when Gill had the erection it was not funny at all. Thus, when Rubi had a similar phantasy it was perceived as funny as long as it was not explicitly sexual.

Again, Mother spoke about the nursery and one's impression is that Gill had something very special away from home – the nursery,— whereas Rubi had something very special at home - Mother, who did enable a space for Rubi's instincts (but not for Gill's).

Gill constructed a missile with the plastic container on top of it and turned Mother's attention to the container, which did not fall off. Whereas before the ice came down from the sky the missile moved to the opposite direction. The missile and the container represented a penis and its container. Turning Mother's attention to the container Gill seems to say: "Look Mother, we can make contact in this way". Rubi destroyed the structure and then Gill hit him. The whole fighting seems to be about who would be the one to make the union with "mother plastic container". Mother shouted at Gill but not at Rubi, who was crying, and once again it was the infantile part that drove her into action and to which she responded. She did not respond to the more mature needs of Gill. Mother hugged Rubi (who was crying), and he then sat on her lap. Sitting on Mother's lap, they began to create together a state of the missile (Rubi) and the container on top of it (Mother). To start with, Rubi was in identification with Mother, who could look after his pain. Then Rubi started to feed himself and Mother with the fork. By putting food inside Mother he was actually becoming the missile and he was doing it in front of Gill. Thus Rubi became Father, he was the winner. He then started knocking with the fork as if he was playing a drum and at that point the focus of the experience was not the feeding penetration but rather the noise. He wanted people to hear and see that he was Father but the contact itself became marginal and insignificant.

Again, Rubi destroyed that missile that Gill had re-erected. Again Mother shouted at Gill not to hit Rubi. She told Rubi not to destroy it again and then she wanted Gill to

apologise. Again, Mother identified with the infantile need but not with the reality. Forcing Gill to look at Rubi while apologising she seems to say: "Make a space in your mind for the other person, this is the thing that turns a contact into real contact". Until that point Mother did not help the boys to co-operate and to share a phantasy of how to build a sense of potency.

Mother then joined the construction of the missile. She made the boys take turns, each putting a brick, and she then threw the missile up in the air, destroying it. Thus, co-operation (building) could not survive because omnipotence (flying it) took over. This was the destructive element in Mother's relationship with Father and in Father's relationship with the boys. On top of this the pleasure was displaced from doing to undoing and the three of them joined together in this destructive intercourse.

It was the destruction rather than the creation that excited Mother. She destroyed the construction and then did a manic reparation in building it again, just in order to repeat the cycle. This was the model for growth and development that she offered to the boys. In playing, Mother failed to keep her adult part and she became a child. She was seduced by the excitement of destruction to ruin the missile-penis. The missile representing Father's masculinity and potency was fragmented into pieces and it was impossible to communicate with it. The only way that the parents could be in touch with each other and could create a couple was by idealising themselves as they were projecting all the destructiveness into other people. Therefore no one had mentioned Father in their conversations. Rubi and Gill built the missile in Father's memory. It was this missile that Mother destroyed because she could not bear that the boys were fighting over to whom the potency belonged. She was angry with Father, between the rest for not being there, and as she felt so lonely she could identify with need only, but not with growth.

#### 9.26 Models for the mastery of Oedipal anxiety

Due to the age difference between them, Gill and Rubi used different models in situations where they were struggling with Oedipal rivalry and its entailed anxiety. Gill was already at the stage where he was identifying with Father while he was struggling with his

ambivalence towards him. Rubi was at the stage where he was re-separating from Mother as he began to attend the nursery. His identification with Father involved an intensive use of projective identification and therefore a higher degree of confusion as to whether "he was Father" or "like Father". Accordingly they dealt with the Oedipal anxiety in different ways. Rubi used omnipotence as a means of denying his anxiety and when he resorted to the use of projection he tended to evacuate his anxiety. Gill was more "realistic" than Rubi. He identified with the powerful admired images of Father and projected the killing image combined with the parts of himself which were experienced in the phantasy to be damaged by Father. (The assumption here is that the identifications with the loved and admired images of the father would constitute part of the formation of the Ego ideal, the self conception of how he wishes to be, and the images of the "killing father" would be a part of the formation of the super-ego).

The two different models for the mastery of Oedipal anxiety are well demonstrated by Observation 6, 26.10.91, pp. 184-186: "Gill told me that Father had gone ... and Mother was in bed ... He showed me ... pictures of amphibian cars ... saying that the cars were boats as well ... Simon laughingly told me that Gill had lied to me ... Gill wanted a slice of cake ... Rubi took the cake and broke a piece off it ... Rubi ... held the slice, pushing the plate away ... Batya arrived ... She said that Rubi's speech had developed significantly ... and that he had begun to occupy himself on his own. The boys walked on the radiator ... Gill announced that there was a dead fly ... he asked for a tissue with which to pick up the dead fly ... Rubi held the fly with two fingers ... and dropped it in the rubbish bin ... Rubi went to his room ... Gill lay next to Father, hugging him. Rubi came back holding a guitar ... Rubi kicked the foam ball, running after it and kicking it again ...".

Gill opened the door and told me that Father went out and Mother was asleep, thus saying "I am alone at home; I am the adult here". He took me to his room and showed me the amphibious car, a car which is more than one thing. Telling me about the car which can also be a boat he seems to be saying: "Is it like me? Gill who is a little boy and Gill who is identifying with Father and representing him". I then discovered that Simon was actually at home and I realised that Gill had lied to me. In the sequence as a whole Gill's

dual structure, or dual capability, is evident: (1) I identify with Father; (2) I dispose of Father (lying to me). Perhaps he wanted me to see this capability.

Simon laughed about Gill's lying to me, as if he was saying: "This is a clever initiative. The way to deal with anxiety is by manipulating the situation". Gill's anxiety was: how to continue growth, identifying with Father without killing him. How to integrate the love and admiration for Father with the hate and rivalry.

Rubi arrived and he was able to create a direct contact with me, offering me a piece of cake. He did not need to lie. Gill asked Simon to cut a slice of cake for him, which he put on a plate, and then Gill ate it in a civilised manner. Rubi joined Gill and started to eat directly from the whole cake. In doing so, Rubi seems to be saying: "Let's not waste time asking Father and then having to wait. At my age - 18 months old - I get what I want immediately and whenever I want it". Gill, who was at a different age, was very preoccupied with the resolution of aggression, called the authority back - he called to Father to come and cut a piece for Rubi. In this respect Gill was the one to contain Rubi's aggression. Until that point in the observation it was Gill who contained Father: he opened the door for me and he called Father to come and deal with Rubi. The plate that both Father and Gill wanted Rubi to use was a defence, an object to contain aggression. Rubi and Gill represent two different styles to approach the object - directly and indirectly.

Simon read out aloud some interesting bits of news from the newspapers for my benefit. He was thus saying: "This is not for you children, this is a potent link that only the adult men can share". The whole observation until that point seems to be like a reunion of old boys, who would be the most potent.

Batya arrived and told me that Rubi had cried in nursery when they had separated, and after that things had improved and he did not cling to her; also his speech had developed. Batya seems to say that Rubi had difficulty in dealing with anxiety around separation but that he took replacement objects when she went away. It appears that Rubi had moved from experiencing Mother as an internal object with which he was in relative symbiosis, to experiencing Mother as being external to him and separate. He therefore created more

symbols and his language had developed. Probably, once he discovered that he was able to create images of Mother with which he could play and develop he became less clinging.

While Mother told me about Rubi's new development, Gill looked outside as if he was re-arranging his relationship with an external object. He then began to walk on the radiator and Rubi imitated him. In the phantasy the hot radiator seems to be a substitute for Mother that both boys enjoyed walking on. When they had finished this walking Gill discovered the dead fly which represented his fate: "This is what Father would do to you because you wanted to make the walking contact with Mother". He then came to Mother - the real object - and asked her for a tissue because he wanted to get rid of the part of himself that had been killed. The request for a tissue was an attempt to create a link with a non-sexual good mother who would help him to wrap the dead part and then to project it out. The dead part was the "penis" which had touched the "radiator" and as Gill was an elegant boy - that is at the age in which he had already organised defences, he did not touch it with his hand. Rubi, unlike Gill, omnipotently picked up; the dead fly with his fingers and brought it to the centre of the room, putting it in a place where no-one would be able to avoid the subject. The difference between the boys was that Gill was already aware of the dangers involved in Oedipal rivalry and he was therefore unable to operate omnipotently. With the tissue Gill was still anxious about touching the fly and he asked whether it was dead or alive? "Can I survive my sexual phantasies?" It was again Rubi who picked up the dead fly and threw it into the rubbish bin. Thus Rubi seems to be saying: "I can touch it, my desire does not kill me". Again there is a difference in the way that the boys dealt with the Oedipal anxiety. Rubi disposed of it into the rubbish bin. Gill left his anxiety inside that dead object.

Once they both got rid of the dead fly they started to run as if they were saying: "My body is alive, I am alive". They ran around the table, the place where they ate which represented Mother, the provider. Then they ran to the frig., the source of food representing Mother's body. From there they ran to the radiator which again represented Mother's body.



When Batya talked about the difference in the boys' personalities in relation to fears, Simon commented that Rubi had not yet learnt about insects which stung, adding that when he did know he would be afraid. This comment of Simon's may be interpreted as: "The minute Rubi realises that there are deadly penetrations he will be afraid. he does not yet know how damaging my penetration can be".

It seems that Gill lay next to Father and made physical contact with him because he was trying to reconstruct Father in his mind following the anxiety evoked in the sequence with the fly. At the same time Rubi touched the guitar he had brought from his room. Touching the guitar, which represented Mother's body, was Rubi's way of dealing with his anxiety. Whereas Gill was identifying with Father's position, lying down, Rubi lay the guitar on the floor and bent over it. He smiled at me as he played the guitar, perhaps because he wanted me to confirm that it was possible to touch "Mother guitar" in the act of making music-love. He then went to his room, a place to process his experience, and he came back with a foam ball. He started kicking the foam ball, which represented a soft object into which he was able to put his aggression. It was an object that would not hit him back, a father who would not retaliate. It was a weak and defeated Father following the sequence when he was in total control over the guitar. Gill, unlike Rubi, knew that it was not possible, he knew that Father was stronger and he therefore identified with him, taking his side and not challenging him.

### 9.27 Father as a container for the loss of Mother

The absence of maternal aspects in Father as well as his inability to keep Mother and her link with him in mind were very evident throughout the six months of observations. Therefore when Rubi separated from Mother (and that implies some degree of loss) he could not make a link with the maternal aspects of a father that would contain his feelings of loss, thus helping him to process the loss and to recover the mother image while at the same time identifying with the paternal aspects as well.

Moreover, Father did not facilitate the boys' identifications with him, at times rejecting them. The difficulty in regaining Mother's image, and in recovering from the rejection by Father, and an example of how Rubi dealt with these situations, are well demonstrated in Observation 17, 11.1.92, pp. 208-210: "Simon opened the door, telling me that Batya had gone shopping. He said: 'Come and have coffee with me before you observe the children' ... In the kitchen, Simon introduced me to an Israeli politician who was visiting him ... Rubi arrived ... and said 'chocolate cake' ... and stood on the radiator. Simon told him to go back to his room ... I found Rubi watching T.V. in the living room ... He said: 'somersault' ... He said: 'lorry, rubbish lorry, driving' ... He sat for six or seven minutes repeating the words about the rubbish lorry and ending with the hands disappearing ... He put the white container on the floor ... and said to me: 'birthday cake' ... He started running in the room pushing the toy oven ... He put the 'birthday cake' inside the oven ... It was time to stop ... He went to join Gill and the au pair".

Simon had invited me to have coffee with the adult men "before I went to observe the children". When Rubi arrived in the kitchen, Simon made it very clear to him that when I was in the kitchen I was not there for the children and he told Rubi to leave the kitchen. Clearly, the adult men did not facilitate the boys' identifications with them. Rubi went to the living room where the T.V. became his companion. When Father did not enable Rubi to have a space to project his phantasies, he did it with the T.V. Usually, when Mother was at home Rubi got a piece of chocolate cake. However, when he wanted a piece, Father told him to go to his room. In the living room Rubi was alone and rejected.

When I joined Rubi he mentioned the word somersault each time he observed it on the T.V. Somersault, a difficult jump, represented a person who could alter the course of an event. He then gradually developed a long sequence of play. He arranged a pile of cushions on which he sat and called it "lorry". The lorry represented a place inside which he could put his phantasies. In the kitchen Father deprived him of this type of space. Then the T.V. functioned as this space. The lorry replaced the space of the T.V. He then moved the structure of the piles and put them next to me on the sofa. Sitting on his "lorry" next to me he was not alone any longer, but with me.

The lorry became a "rubbish lorry" and once in a while he pushed his hands under the cushions saying "engine". The lorry represented a large container. The rubbish stood for the remains of something after it had been used. The rubbish in this case represented the ruins of his phantasy that he would identify with men, with Father. (It had been destroyed by Father, who had sent him from the kitchen). Mentioning the engine, Rubi indicated that something was still alive there. he then pushed his hand between the mattress and the back support of the sofa and said "No hand, disappeared". Doing so, Rubi appears to be saying: "I was rejected earlier and I will therefore destroy things with my hand-penis. Now you are playing with me and I therefore don't want to destroy anything any more. I hide my hand, it becomes a game and I am laughing". Rubi repeated this game over and over again and it became a ritualised game. In the sequence as a whole he created the pile, a structure of damaged and destroyed phantasies. He touched them with his hand, checking that they were not destroyed completely. He kept repeating the words and this was a transition from action into words, words in the service of reducing the anxiety caused when he had been rejected from the kitchen by the "men". Rubi then began to develop the next sequence. He went to his room, put the white container on the floor which he called a birthday cake, came to me and said "disgusting cake". A birthday is an event to celebrate. Rubi was celebrating the fact that his phantasies of identifying with men, the phantasies which he had had when he had come to the kitchen, were now alive and not destroyed. He then called the cake disgusting. The disgusting cake represented the objects in reality, the men who had rejected him. He was still angry with them for rejecting him.

Rubi then rode the electric Vespa in the room. Riding the Vespa, which had an engine of its own, he seems to be in touch with an omnipotent phantasy of being able to move from place to place or perhaps a thought that it was possible to move, to recover from the rejection. With this phantasy in mind, he rode around the "birthday cake".

Rubi put the Vespa aside and started to develop the next sequence. He pushed and played with the toy oven. The oven represented an object from which good food came out. This was the opposite of creating rubbish. Whereas earlier it had been debris that

came out of the cushion structure, now it was good food that came out of the oven. Rubi brought the oven to the "white container birthday cake", thus bringing the two objects representing these two opposites into the same space. Ideally, this is the function which should be fulfilled by the parents in their minds. Pushing the "container cake" into the oven, Rubi was recreating for himself the good object he had lost earlier. He was recreating an alive good object out of the destructive experience he had gone through. He opened and closed the oven door so many times because he wanted to see that the oven was really "alive". Gill at that point introduced a story that summed up Rubi's bad experiences earlier: "People had pumped all the water from the river, there was no water left, only mud, and all the boats were stuck in the mud". This may be interpreted as: "Someone has taken the water and caused damage". This is the thing that had been done to Rubi in the kitchen. Father had taken away Rubi's wish for a good experience in identifying with men and had destroyed it. Things were in the mud, in the faeces, in the rubbish, in danger of being dead.

Rubi brought the oven to the centre of the room where he had put the birthday cake earlier. The oven represented the absent mother whom he had managed to switch on in his mind to help him process the bad experience.

Throughout the observation Gill seemed to find a substitute for Mother. He was by the window where he was creating links with the au pair who introduced symbols - the stories she read to him. Once I had joined Rubi in the living room he was in an identification with me. As I said that I was about to go, Rubi went to the place where there was a parental function, to the au pair and Gill. As I put on my coat Rubi pointed at the screw which held the seagull to the ceiling saying "screw, screw". It was the link that held two things securely together at which Rubi pointed. It was this type of link that he had been creating with me throughout the observation. If he was represented by the seagull, I was represented by the ceiling. The au pair lifted him up and Rubi touched the string of the seagull saying "flying". The au pair supported him, giving him a physical link, whereas I represented an abstract link. Being held between the au pair and me enabled Rubi to "fly" - to think.

At the beginning of the observation there was no evidence for the presence of the absent mother in Rubi's mind. Father was unable to supply Rubi with this image. Rubi was left alone to deal with this loss. I then joined Rubi in the living room. He produced a pile of destroyed images. Next, he started to rebuild these images. The destroyed images were linked to the bad experience with Father and to the loss of Mother. While he was playing with the hand disappearing he was preoccupied with re-establishing in his mind lost images. That is: Mother who was absent and the bad experience with Father. The play consisted of the object disappearing and reappearing. At that point he was playing with me and he was not alone. I was the person to supply him with a containing space, a pre-condition for this play. Once he recovered the lost images and processed some of the loss, he made a further step and established new links: (1) the birthday cake; (2) the oven. Throughout the observation Rubi was processing the loss of the parental images, demonstrating how he was trying to replace them.

#### 9.28 Models for the resolution of Oedipal situations

Both boys were at the genital Oedipal phase of development but at different stages. Towards the end of the period of observations Gill was four years and five months, about to enter the latency phase, whereas Rubi, who was two years and three months, had just entered into its first stage. Whereas Gill was capable of identifying with Father and turning to a replacement object for Mother while competing with Father, it was a much harder struggle for Rubi. The difference in the models they used for mastery of Oedipal anxiety, which was explored earlier, corresponds to their different model for the resolution of the Oedipal situation. This issue is well demonstrated by Observation 22, 15.2.92, pp. 220-222: "... Simon came out of the bedroom, saying that they had just woken up and would be with me soon ... Rubi hit the floor with the sword and then the walls around him ... He did this for about fifteen minutes ... Gill said that he had built a Mercedes Castle with Paula and that they were driving it ... Rubi lay down on the hammock ... He stepped on the sheep skin and said that it was a fish ... He said that the sword was a Hoover ... Rubi put the doll inside the oven ... Finally he left inside the oven only the bigger teddy with

the doll and he closed the door. Simon and Batya came ... Rubi told Father that he needed batteries for the drill ...".

Throughout the observation Gill and Rubi presented two different models for the resolution of Oedipal situations: Rubi was using his sword to kill whereas Gill built a "Mercedes Castle", better than the one Father had.

As soon as I entered Rubi said to me, "There is a cake in the oven". The cake represented something nourishing that Mother produced. The oven probably represented Mother's body. The parents were in their room, still in bed. Hitting everything around him with the sword, Rubi appears to be attacking Mother's body, cutting it for betraying him and not being faithful. Gill had a more constructive solution in the face of the parental couple being in bed. He built a Mercedes Castle, similar to Father's Mercedes, as if he was saying "mine is better". He was playing with the au pair representing Mother and they seemed to have a good intercourse.

As Rubi was wandering around with his sword, attacking, he arrived at the hammock, the place in which Father usually lay. He did not attack the hammock but rather, he lay inside it in the manner in which Father usually did. Thus he became Father. At that point the hammock became a ship and Rubi was sailing in this unconscious space. He lay in the hammock, touching the floor with his legs, swinging himself. Whenever he did not manage to touch the floor with his legs so that he could push himself, he said "It does not work". Thus it seems that in order for the phantasies to work he had to be in touch with the unconscious energy stemming from touching "mother-floor-house", an internal object, with his legs. This was the first step in processing his Oedipal anger. The legs replaced the sword and now he was making a link instead of killing.

He next threw the sheep skin onto the floor. It became a fish on which he was jumping. Thus again he touched with his legs, making contact with the floor and the "fish". Via the identification with Father, lying in the hammock, he became able to make a contact rather than destroy with the sword.

Gill came into the room and explained to me that the sheep skin was a dolphin and the large cushions that Rubi was jumping on represented a whale. The dolphin seems to

represent a young male, a young penis. Whereas the "fish" that Rubi had created was a wide category, Gill designed the phantasy by giving names to it: "a dolphin and a whale". At that point we had three different sizes: a fish - small, a dolphin - medium, and a whale - very large. The three categories represented an order like: Father, Gill and Rubi. Jumping on the sheep skin and on the cushions, Rubi was making a contact with all these images. In my presence in the room I represented the good image of Father, the father who did not threaten, with whom Rubi did not fight.

Having completed the first cycle of processing his Oedipal anger, Rubi went to his room where he began the second round. He took the sword and "hoovered" the carpet, saying that it was a Hoover. He then took the toy drill and saying that it was a Hoover he moved it above the desk. The sword represented a big penis but this time it did not destroy and cut. The drill represented a small penis which functioned like the big one. Thus, when the big sword penis of Father did not damage but was used in order to repair, then Rubi with his "little drill" penis did not damage, but used it in order to repair. The screw which he pretended to screw into the desk represented the possibility of making a non-damaging connection. He then touched the doll with the drill on the eyes, the mouth, the ears, the bottom and the stomach. It seems that with the drill representing his penis, Rubi touched all the orifices through which one could enter the body. Gill then said that Rubi was playing being a doctor. Being a doctor represented a phantasy of an idealised entrance into Mother's body.

Rubi next put the doll inside the oven, saying that it was hot. He then tried to squeeze the small and the big teddies into the oven together with the doll. When he found he was unable to fit all of them inside, he just put the doll and the big teddy in the oven. The oven represented the good part of Mother's body, perhaps the womb, where cakes were produced. Saying that it was hot, he seems to indicate that it was alive and exciting. The doll he had put inside seems to represent the little girl part of Mother or just Mother. The small and the big teddies appear to be representations of himself at different stages of his development, or himself and Gill, or himself and Father. Whichever was the case, there was not enough space for all of them inside the oven and he ended up leaving the big

teddy and the doll inside the oven. Leaving this particular couple inside the oven, Rubi actually created a situation in which Mother and Father were together in the same way that they were together at the beginning of the observation - in bed as a couple. It is only that this time he did not destroy anything with his sword. Taking the sequence with the oven as a whole, it seems that once he had the sword/father he went on to create a mother with the oven. He then put himself and Father inside the created mother and ended up with a couple of which he was not a part. Thus he managed to process his jealousy and rivalry and came to terms with the parental couple.

Asking Father to give him the batteries for the drill Rubi seems to ask Father: "Give me your resources and your identity to use in my development".

### 9.29 Summary: Rubi

We begin with a phase where his difficulties in separating from mother are evident, and where there is an early oedipal resolution based on projective identification with the father. During the six months of observation the separation difficulties were resolved and towards the end of the period the child came to a more mature oedipal resolution.

The following factors seemed to be important:—

- (1) Father provided very little containment; he was seldom available for wife and children. The mother felt lonely and unsupported, and being an immigrant increased this feeling. Both parents tended to look for emotional support from material goods rather than from relationships
- (2) To maintain his omnipotence Father projected his infantile feelings on to the mother and, to a lesser extent, on to the children.
- (3) Being unsupported, the mother at times lost her capacity to function as an adult.
- (4) It seemed that Rubi's feeling of being uncontained increased his separation difficulties.

In more detail we can say:—

- (1) He identified with a father who was constantly on the move.



**(2) He found it difficult to separate from a mother who felt lonely and could not tolerate being left.**

**(3) The absence of maternal aspects in father, and his difficulty in holding in mind his link with his wife, meant that the child would be moving into a vacuum when he took steps to separate from his mother.**

**CHAPTER TEN**

**CONCLUSIONS**

## **CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS**

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## **10.0 SUMMARY of FINDINGS**

With all six children observed the presence of a male observer facilitated the separation of mother and child. This presence (and the resultant shared emotional space between mother and observer) helped both mother and child jointly to create their own space in which to stand back from a potentially engulfing experience; and from within this ordered space the child could initiate separation by exploring the different parts of him/herself. Also, the child could make use of the observer as a container of meaning, introjecting the observer's capacity to think and be reflective.

In contrast to the single mothers, with the comparison group a link was established between observer and father. The father's implicit approval of the observations established a safe setting for them, minimising anxiety and also enabling the observer to maintain a more passive role.

All three of the comparison group mothers created a couple with the observer, but only one of the single mothers did so.

Referring to the internal worlds of the children, the following functional desiderata of the combined parental figure emerged clearly:

- 1) The figure to be able to support a bounded space containing the different identifications of the child.
- 2) The figure to be capable of repairing the damage to the parental couple, and to the mother or him/herself caused by his/her attacks.
- 3) The figure to enable the creation of a space where the child can feel contained by both parents.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **10.10 The Study Group**

First we shall discuss the findings relating to the first sample of three, the study group.

### **10.11 The differences and similarities between children and mothers observed**

Clearly, the three mothers and the three children observed for the purposes of this research are very different from each other in many respects. Tina is white, English, from a very deprived working-class background. Susan is Indian, came from Trinidad to live in this country as an adult, and is a nurse by profession. Orna is Israeli, came to study in Britain and later on came to live here. Of the three mothers, she is by far the most educated. All of the children were approximately two years old at the beginning of the observations; one of them is a boy and the other two are girls.

### **10.12 The mother's link with the observer**

It seems that in all the three families observed, the presence of a male observer facilitated a complicated process, its main feature being some degree of separation between mothers and children, and the establishment and modification of relationships between child, observer, and mother. These relationships were interlinked and determined to a great extent the child's ability to benefit from the association with the observer in order to work through the facts of his/her life and to reach a mental organisation which enabled a process of growth, in the case of Mark and Mina, rather than a constant repetition of similar situations, in the case of Karen.

How does one know whether a process of change arises from a developmental issue or is due to the presence of the observer, or perhaps due to another constellation inside or outside the family, of which the family was not even aware? My answer to this question would be as follows:--

1) One can not say definitely.

- 2) Any human phenomenon is shaped by different variables in a complex process involving interaction between them. It is therefore misleading to attribute results to a specific factor in a causal way. It is, rather, a matter of degrees and mutuality.
- 3) It seems plausible to assume that the presence of the observer facilitated a process of development which had not been evident at the beginning of the observations. From that point onwards, development took a natural course.
- 4) The focus here will be the contribution made by the presence of the observer. This does not preclude the influence of other factors.

Following the changes (which were described in the discussion chapters) that all three children went through during the period of observations, it seems that the observer functioned as a container of meaning for the families. It seems that in the continual presence of an observer whose internal world was in the service of the family, the children introjected the observer's capacity to think. In the case of Mark and Orna it was the whole family that introjected the capacity to be reflective. This does not mean that the observer functioned either willingly or unintentionally as a psychotherapist; very likely any other adaptive adult would have had a similar effect.

The quality of the relationship formed between mother and observer seemed to reflect the mother's link with her own internal parental figures. This in turn determined: i) The quality of the child's experience when the mother functioned at times as what is usually perceived as a "father"; ii) the extent to which the mother enabled the child to establish his/her relationship with the observer and to change thereby.

The quality of the link with the observer was different with each of the mothers, and the nature of that link was manifest from the outset, especially in the mother's motivation to take part in the research.

Orna wished to contribute to the understanding of single mothers and their children, as she said clearly in the initial meeting with the observer. Accordingly, as it emerged during the period of observation, she created with the observer a "couple" who got together in order to think about the child. For example, she was interested in the meaning of Mark's

behaviour and at times formulated her own hypotheses as to what his activity might mean. At the initial meeting with the observer, Orna also stressed that she was aware of the absence of a father figure in Mark's life and said that she hoped that her male friends, with whom Mark had a relationship, would give him a similar experience. She formed a friendly relationship with the observer who felt genuinely welcome, sharing with him some of the events in Mark's life that took place between observations. There were male friends who visited and it seems that men were constantly on the mind of both the mothers who shared the flat. She enabled Mark to develop fully a relationship with the observer and to benefit from it. No doubt the common cultural of mother and observer in this case facilitated such a development.

It appears that Susan's main motivation for participating in the research was for the observer to find out whether Mina was an ordinary child or whether there was something wrong with her, as her mother was a single parent. Like Orna, she made this clear at the initial contact, by saying so. It seems important to note that both Orna and Susan were aware of the possible difficulties for the child as a result of the absence of a father.

In the couple situation that Susan and Sita created with the observer, he was given a well defined slot to come to observe; but yet he never felt welcome. Both of them were polite rather than friendly. As described in the Results chapter, Susan always avoided contact with the observer: not keeping appointments, cutting them short or busying herself in the kitchen. Sita was always present during the observations, sitting at the far end of the room, at times watching TV. She seemed to be supervising the observer's relationship with Mina and the family. But Mina was given the space to develop her relationship with the observer as distinct and separate from the adults' relationship with him. In this case, unlike the situation with Orna, there were cultural differences, and they made it more difficult for the observer.

Unlike Susan and Orna, Tina did not have an explicit motive for taking part in the observations. In the initial meeting and throughout the period of observations, she was passive and did not enquire about the purpose of the observations and the observer, as if she did not have the right to do so. She "did not mind if she and Karen were observed",



and she seemed to be expecting to do some special activities with Karen for the observer. Indeed, one aspect of the couple situation she created with the observer was that she almost always performed as a competent mother with a competent girl. Often the observer in the countertransference felt that he was exploiting and depriving Tina, not responding to her needs. (For example when Karen was hospitalised and Tina left three messages for the observer. See Observation 4). When she did co-operate with the observer, she would create a couple that excluded Karen, treating her sadistically. Retrospectively it seems that Tina, quite unlike Orna, was crying out for help, in particular for someone to function as a father for all her children.

As already pointed out one derived an image of Tina as a child who had never experienced a benign parental presence. The parental figures in her mind seemed to be damaged, helpless, sadistically and enviously depriving and excluding Tina and each other. When functioning as a parent, she seemed to be in projective identification with these parental figures, treating Karen accordingly. In the couple situation that she formed with the observer, she tended to shift between two states. The first state was one of identifying with the deprived and exploited little girl part of herself, projecting onto the observer her own internal parental figures. In the second state she created with the observer a sadistic couple who, when not attacking each other, were treating the child sadistically. This last feature became prominent once Karen managed to establish in her mind a link based on thinking with the observer. Karen's thinking link (Bion, 1962) with the observer was in contrast with the links she had with Tina which were mainly links of hate and envy (Bion, 1962). Tina did not allow a space for Karen to develop any relationship with the observer beyond the point of becoming a competent girl. It seems that this was the stage that Tina managed to reach in her development, playing her counterpart by being a competent mother. From that point in the observations onward, Tina directed her attacks on Karen towards the thinking part of Karen and its link with the observer. As this part of Karen made her different from Mother and could have enabled her to develop further, Tina enviously tried to annihilate it in order to deprive Karen of a different experience. Indeed, she enviously and hatefully deprived not only

Karen, but Kevin and Dora as well . It seems that in Karen, Tina produced a copy of herself in relation to her parental figures. As it emerged in the observations , at times one felt that Tina did not abort Karen and did not give her up for adoption because she envied and hated her so much.

### 10.13 Differences and similarities in development of the children and their mothers throughout the period of observation

The crucial factor appears to be the quality of the parental couple object in the mother's mind as it was reflected in i) her relationship with the observer; ii) her relationship with the child; iii) the formation or non-formation of a triangular relationship consisting of the mother, the child and the observer. And the latter formation is to a great extent dependent on her relationship with the observer. In the couple situation, Orna created with the observer a thinking link, whereas Susan created links of non-availability leading to the observer feeling tantalised, as he was allowed to have a relationship with the child, but not with the mother. Nevertheless Susan did not attack the child's links with the observer. By contrast, it seems that from the beginning, Tina did not understand the purpose of the observation. Then she made a link based on deprivation and exploitation which later on developed into envy and hate. It was never a link based on thinking, and she constantly attacked the child's link with the observer. The development of the children in the observations seems in accord with this analysis.

In Karen's case there seemed to be a shift from a state of total union with Tina at the beginning of the observations to a state of some degree of separation when she became a competent and independent girl.. From that point onward there was no development, and observations seemed to be a repetition of similar situations, where Tina attacked Karen. The main factors which played a part in this impasse are i) Tina's envy and hate arising from her internal parental figures; ii) Tina's inability to think and process her emotional experience as well as Karen's, due to her two dimensional personality (Meltzer, 1975) and

the total absence of internal space (Bion, 1962). This is in sharp contrast with the development of Mark and Mina throughout the observations.

Through his relationship with the observer, and also through Orna's relationship with the observer, Mark seems to have developed differently. As described in the discussion chapter, at the beginning of the period of observations, separation between Mark and Mother seemed to be an amorphic state. In moments of separation the groups functioned as a barrier to an experience of absence for both Mark and Mother. As observations proceeded, Mark moved to a state of a distinct separation from the group through an establishment of a vantage point and preoccupation with a combined object. This led to a formation of a clear gender identity, and in turn, to a working through of an Oedipal triangular relationship. The main factors which played a role in this development are: i) the thinking link Orna made with the observer in the couple situation; ii) Mark's link with the observer which was allowed to develop fully; iii) the establishment of a triangular relationship consisting of the mother, the child and the observer. (It would seem that the fact that the observer is Israeli, coming from a similar background to Orna's and to Mark's natural father, has contributed positively to Mark's and Orna's links with him, compared with those of the other two families); (iv) Orna's impressive ability, not only to think about the emotional experience of Mark and herself, but to tolerate the mental pain entailed by the processes of change and development. One of the main characteristics of a state of separation is that all parties involved embark on a process during which things take shape and meanings by degrees. All three mothers sensed that some process was taking place. The pain involved in the separation process in itself constitutes a threat to the parent. Moreover, the question seemed to arise, once development was under way: "What's happening?" But that which is in the process of acquiring a shape and meaning is inherently nameless, indescribable, and this is experienced by the parent as an intolerable threat. Of the three mothers, only Orna was able to sustain this anxiety, this suspension of knowledge.

With Mina, like Mark, there seemed to be significant development throughout the observations. In her case, the initial problem was not one of separation, but one of

integrating the observer and then the father into her family. In a setting in which the mother wanted to make no links with the observer, Mina quickly established a thinking link with him. She then seemed to move to explore the area in her life which was blocked for thinking by Sita and Susan, that is, the parents' past relationship. She then struggled to be able to think about her father without restriction. The struggle threw into relief her central difficulty: the integration of the gender identifications. Unlike Mark, who did not have a distinct male identification, Mina to some degree had a father object in her mind but could not integrate it, as she felt that Susan was rejecting the boy parts of her. This phenomenon corresponded to Susan's "no link" with the observer. Once Mina managed to work through her experience of non-integration, she seemed to develop Oedipal phantasies which in turn led to preoccupation with a combined object. With Mina, unlike Mark, the preoccupation with the combined object resulted in an experience of a retarded part of the self, a result of Father not being there. Unlike Mina, Mark managed to move past this stage and to explore Oedipal triangular relationships. One wonders as to the explanation of this difference. It is possible that the lack of a no-couple link between Susan and the observer did not enable Mina to move further. The thinking link she was allowed to develop enabled Mina to work through her experiences, to process them and to elucidate meanings, and in turn, to come to terms with the facts of her life: to come to terms, to accept, but not, however, to go beyond. It seems that Mina managed to constitute a father figure in her mind but found it very difficult to be in identification with it. In Mark's case, the thinking couple Orna made with the observer enabled him to move past the processing of his experiences and working them through, to an identification with an internalised couple.

#### 10.131 The actual presence of a third figure

In all three children observed, the presence of an observer, and perhaps significantly a male observer, seemed to facilitate a process of change. One wonders whether a pre-condition for the mother's and the child's ability to think and verbalise a father figure, a "creation in the mind", is the presence in reality of such a figure which would activate the

corresponding links in the mother's mind. Clearly, even in Orna's case, the presence of an observer was necessary to activate her potential to create a couple. In Tina's case, as damaged as she was, the presence of the observer facilitated a process of at least a physical separation. It is interesting to note that once some separation had taken place and both Karen and Tina appeared to be in a state of depression, the absence of a father seemed to be experienced as the lack of a figure who would fill in the spaces and give them shape and meaning, that is, the hope of finding another relationship into which to separate from the previous mother-child relationship. Without it, "Karen was in a state of an object floating around", desperately trying to make a link with the observer, "perhaps as she felt she could still be somebody for him by giving him the tea with or without sugar".

Similarly in Mark's case, when both he and Orna resorted to the groups in a state of blurred separation, it needed the physical presence of the observer to enable him to separate from the group and to achieve a state of mind in which he could explore the different parts of himself. Indeed, the whole group needed the presence of the other in order to develop.

In addition to the above, it appeared that in order to find a location for his/her existence in reality, the child needed an affirmation of the extended family. In Karen's case, Tina's family rejected Karen. Orna's family accepted Mark and kept a reasonable relationship with them but did not loom large in their daily life. Mina had weekly contact with her father. Susan stayed with her own family for the first three months of Mina's life and then left her there for six months when she came back to London. Then Sita, the niece, looked after Mina in London. This may explain the fact that Mina was the child who had the clearest sense of identity at the beginning of the observations.

#### 10.132 Gender identifications

The issue of gender identification did not emerge in Karen's observations. Neither did a preoccupation with sexual phantasies emerge. This is not surprising, considering the

blurring of individuality in the Karen-Tina duo and the impossibility for Karen to make links with people other than Tina.

Mina clearly had a feminine relation with the observer: like a little girl with her father. Her central difficulty was to integrate her male identifications as she felt that Mother could not accept them. At the same time, she was struggling with the idea that Father preferred boys. In grappling with this, she developed sexual phantasies regarding Oedipal triangular relationships.

With Mark, unlike Mina, the initial problem in relation to gender identity was one of confusion rather than integration. As pointed out, Mark referred to himself in the feminine form in Hebrew at the beginning of the observations. Though he clearly appeared as a masculine little boy playing with cars, it was well into the fourth month of observations when he made his definite statement "I am a boy", and as Orna said: "to become very aware of his gender identity .... and clearly refer to himself as a male" . It was only when a process of separation from the group had begun and he began to explore the different parts of himself that an internal experience of a vantage point and a combined parental object was established, and Mark was able to sort out his gender confusion. This was followed by an elaboration of Oedipal phantasies and an evident Oedipal rivalry that could have been avoided before, when he lost Mother to the group. However, once he had a clear gender identity as a male, there emerged the difficulty of group and Mother containing him as an "aggressive male". This difficulty is similar to Mina's difficulty in integrating male identifications, as they were clearly not accepted by her family group.

#### 10.133 The combined parental figure

Evidently both Mark and Mina went through a stage of preoccupation with a combined parental figure. However, in each case, different aspects of the experience of this object were highlighted. Mina, coming from an experience of the absence of one part of the combined object, seemed to struggle with a feeling of incompleteness, with a consequent sense of shaky identity. This emphasises the main characteristics of the combined figure

as a container: i) a clearly bounded space containing the different identifications of the child, ii) an object capable of mitigating the damage that the child feels he has caused to the couple, the mother, or him/herself by his/her attacks (Meltzer, 1973). In the absence of this combining activity, the child would find it difficult to deal with mental pain and would tend to regress to narcissistic states (Britton, 1989).

With Mark, the emphasis was on the functions for the child of a space where he felt contained by two parents. Having this space provides the child with a vantage point from which s/he can explore his/her relationship with each parent, the parents' relationship with each other and his/her relationship with the couple (Britton, 1989). In this process, the child is able to explore and develop the different identifications constituting his identity, and develop them according to his priorities. One essential outcome of the experience of the couple as defining a place where things can come together in relative harmony is the child's capacity to integrate opposites.

To some extent, these were aspects of which Mina was deprived due to: i) Susan's inability to form a couple; ii) the issue of the shame, which prevented an exploration of the couple's relationship.

In Karen's case, the necessary pre-condition for an experience of a combined parental figure,- some degree of separation from Mother, did not exist.

#### 10.134 Guilt and the capacity for reparation

The mother's difficulty in accepting and integrating the different or the other was evident in all three cases.

With Karen, Tina was totally unable to tolerate any difference which would distinguish her from her daughter . With Mina, Susan was unable to make a link with the observer, and to permit any incursion of maleness into the family .

With Mark, the difficulty was evident in the struggle to accept the "aggressive male" into the group . As mentioned earlier, both Susan and Orna were aware of the possible implications for the child as a result of being single parents. At the same time, it was only

Orna of the three mothers who allowed the relationship between the child, herself and the observer to develop fully.

With Mina, there seemed to be feelings of guilt in relation to the damage she felt she had caused to the parents' relationship in the past, and an urgent plea to mother for help.

When Mina said, "Mummy fix", Mother's reaction was, "You broke it and you are going to repair Humpty Dumpty". Susan seemed to be refusing to take any responsibility for the situation and for its reparation .

With Karen, the need for reparation appeared in relation to: i) the damage experienced due to pain and depression linked to separation; ii) damage which Karen felt she had caused Tina as a result of her oral attacks. But Tina refused to take part in the negotiation of those painful feelings. She was unable to respond to Karen's need to improve the situation by making reparation. This had to be performed by Karen alone .

It seems as if one might hypothesise that in their children, the mothers unconsciously produced a reflection of their own combined parental figure. Themselves deprived of a container, they felt guilty for not providing the child with the kind of containment absent in their own lives. It seems that this guilt made reparation (Klein, 1940) quite difficult. Looked at externally it is easy to see that a parent who is exhausted and frustrated a large part of the time cannot always function as an emotional container for the child. The presence of a parent who feels depressed and damaged, as Tina clearly did, evokes guilt and anxiety in the child, who in turn might take on herself the responsibility for reparation.

### 10.20 The Comparison Group

Next we turn to the sample of three children, each of them from a two parent family.

### 10.21 Differences and similarities between children and mothers observed

The families of the control group are very different from each other in many respects.

Lily's family is white, English, from a deprived working-class background. Ann's family is



Indian, both parents are professional and financially the family is well off. Rubi's family is Israeli and the father is a very successful businessman. The three children were approximately two years old at the beginning of the observations; one of them is a boy and the other two are girls. The main feature in common to the three families is the fact that all of them consisted of two parents and in all of them there was an older sibling.

#### 10.22 The Mother's Link with the Observer

In all the three families observed the presence of a male observer facilitated a complicated process, its main feature being the establishment and modification of the relationship between the children, the observer, the mother and to a lesser extent, the father. The relationships formed between the fathers and the observer were important as these links seem to establish a safe setting for the observations to develop, the father giving his approval and authority for this to take place. This is an important factor as it was the fathers who contained the family's anxiety evoked in the encounter with the observer, thus creating an extra containing space which did not exist in the single mother families. This may partially explain the observer's feeling that it was easier to be present in the two parent families. (This subject will be further developed later on p. 369).

These relationships were interlinked and determined to some extent the child's and the mother's ability to benefit from the presence of the observer in order to process his/her internal and external conflicts. Of the three families observed, Ann and her mother seemed to benefit from their relationship with the observer more than Rubi and Batya. In the case of Lily and Christina, the girl did not manage to maintain the gains she had made from her association with the observer. (This issue will be further developed later).

However, in the case of the comparison group families one can perceive the observer as being located further from the position of a participant (on the spectrum of participant-nonparticipant) than in the case of the single parent families. It would seem that the fact that all the three mothers in the comparison group had formed a couple with the observer, and the fact that the fathers were in the background, played a role in enabling the observer to maintain this more passive position as an observer.

Examining the changes (which were described in the "Discussion" chapters) noted with all three children and their mothers during the period of observations, it appears that in the case of the comparison group families, just as in the case of the single parent families, the observer functioned as a container of meaning for the families. Here as well it seems that the children introjected the observer's capacity to think. In the case of Ann, and to a lesser extent Rubi, the mothers also introjected the capacity to be reflective. The observer functioned as a container (1) for the mother in relation to the child; and (2) for the child in relation to the mother. This was true for both groups - single-parent and two-parent - but it only became obvious to the researcher as time went by, and his insight increased and matured. Given that the mother formed a link with the observer, this link functioned as a container for the child's projections onto the mother. These projections were mainly of two types: (1) anxiety associated with sexual projections; (2) anxiety associated with the pain of separation. This is well demonstrated in all three families.

Ann's relationship with her mother took a different course once the mother was able to perceive her link with the observer as defining the real adult couple. Batya's relationship with Rubi and with the observer demonstrated the functioning of a couple (in this case mother-observer) as container of the pain of separation. Lily's relationship with Christina demonstrates the containment of the sexual projection especially in situations when the observer mitigated the sexual excitement by keeping his link with the mother.

Like other human situations it was not a one-way process and the mothers projected their own anxieties onto the children. It seems that the child's link with the observer (which existed in all six families) functioned as a container for this type of projection. This was evident in all six families and was especially highlighted in the cases of Lily and Karen, in relation to the attack on the child when she was perceived by the mother as being different. It can be said that in the case of Orna and the three mothers in the comparison group it was the observer as well who was contained by the link he had with the mothers and therefore felt less under pressure from the child.

In the comparison group families also the quality of the relationship formed between the mother and the observer seemed to reflect the mother's link with her own internal parental

figures. However, as evidenced by the comparison group, it should be added that the type of the mother's Oedipal resolutions is a very important aspect of it.

The quality of the link with the observer was different with each of the comparison group mothers. Christina took part in the research because, as she said, she was glad to help the observer. She created with the observer a love/dependency link in which she seemed to wish to be acknowledged and hence dependent on the observer. The link was a fragile one as the observer represented something alien to her which she seemed to experience as exciting on the one hand but as threatening on the other hand. Fundamentally, Christina exercised with the observer the link she had with her husband in the couple situation, a state of mutual idealisation while projecting all the bad parts of both partners onto the girl. In the wider constellation including the whole family and the observer there was a predominance of a hateful link, an envious link of knowledge: (-K), (Bion, 1962). The parents did not want Lily to have more knowledge than they had and therefore they attacked Lily the minute she was different from them. In this respect they were very similar to Tina and Karen. Tina attacked any development she had noticed in Karen in order to destroy this development. The difference between these two families was that Christina and John were not as sadistic towards their child as Tina was towards Karen. They were sadistic in a way that one can observe with young children, a sadism stemming from relating to others as part objects. With Tina, the sadism stemmed from an identification with envious, hateful and sadistic parental figures. The presence of a father in the family may partially explain the difference as well.

One wonders whether Shanti's motivation in participating in the research was to receive a professional perspective on Pearl's difficulties and perhaps even help. In this respect there is a similarity to Susan who wanted to find out whether Mina was different from children who had two parents. However, whereas Susan created with the observer a link of partial knowledge, Shanti created a link of more complete knowledge. More than the other mothers, she seemed to want to create with the observer an alliance of professional with professional. In this respect there is a similarity to Orna, who made with the observer links of thinking and co-operation.

It seems that Batya participated in the research because she liked the observer or, more accurately, she hoped to like him on the ground of the information she had collected about him. (See Results: Rubi). She related to the observer from a position in which she was part of a couple with Simon where she felt unhappy and, especially, unequal. She created with the observer links of thinking and a desire for support. (She often competed with the children for the observer's attention). She attempted to create with the observer a link in which she was equal to him and at times it seemed that she was trying to create a situation in which the observer would be dependent on her. This was expressed by the chocolate cakes she fed him and in statements like, "You have stayed your time with the children; come and join the adults for a cup of coffee" (Observation 22).

Clearly, all three mothers in the comparison group created a couple with the observer. Of the single mothers, it was only Orna who created with the observer a similar relationship. There seem to be two factors that may explain this significant difference. (1) The mothers who had partners seem to have better Oedipal resolutions (it can be said that being a single mother is in itself a likely concomitant of that); (2) the presence of a husband on to whom the mothers could project some of their sexual anxiety in relation to the observer enabled the mothers to be more curious in relation to the observer.

### 10.23 The differences and similarities in the development of the children and their mothers throughout the period of observations

Similar to the single parent families, the crucial factor which appears to affect the development of the children and the mothers of the control group appears to be the parental couple object in the mother's mind as it was reflected in her relationships with the observer, the child, and the triangular relationship consisting of the three of them. It is the quality of the links that the mother was capable of creating in all these three situations and the type of Oedipal resolutions that she had that determined the development of both mother and child.

In Lily's case development was arrested and observations seemed to be a repetition of a similar situation though not to the same extent as it was in the case of Karen and her

mother. The main factor which played a role in this impasse was the envious link of knowledge created by the parents. Whereas Karen had managed to develop to a state of some degree of separation, with Lily separation was not an issue as it was well on its way. Rather, it was separateness, as the parents accepted Lily only as long as she was a part of themselves, the silly cow part.

With Rubi, there was a clear process of development of the child and to a lesser extent of Batya. This was reflected in the resolution of the separation difficulties as it was seen in the nursery, at nights, in the development of his speech and his notions of classification. Whereas in Mark's case the development seemed to be through the relationship with the observer and also through Orna's relationship with the observer, in Rubi's case it was a development which was facilitated by the association with the observer. It seems that the above development of Rubi was facilitated by two factors. (1) The support that Batya seemed to receive in her relationship with the observer, which took the form of a passive containment - the observer listening and holding on to a notion in his mind that the difficulties that they were experiencing were a part of a stage of development and would not last for ever. (2) The observer's maternal and paternal aspects with which the boy made a link in the face of separation from his mother and the entailed feelings of loss involved in it. This link, which supplied Rubi with a containing space, enabled the boy to recover the lost images and to establish new links with a separated mother and with a father who facilitated his male identifications. .

The second area of development was in Rubi's ability to reach a more differentiated Oedipal resolution. Whereas at the beginning of observations Rubi seemed to locate himself in the centre of Father's idealised part and to feel and to believe: "I am father", towards the end of the period of observations he managed to pass beyond this point. Through an identification with Father he managed to create a mother and couple of which he was a part and then to separate from this image and to come to terms with it .

It seems that at the beginning of the period of observations Rubi was at the point that Mark had been arriving at towards the end of the period of observations. Rubi, unlike Mark, had a clear gender identity. He seemed to have a well-established vantage point

that created a perspective in his mind that enabled him to move away from the mother.

The separation difficulties and the Oedipal issues in Rubi's case were linked to the final stages of this process. With Mark, the separation from the mother and the group and later on the Oedipal issues were in relation to the creation of the vantage point and he was at the early stages of this process. Indeed, all the children observed as part of the control group had a clear gender identity at the beginning of the observations whereas the children of the single parent group, excluding Mina, did not have it.

With Ann and her mother Shanti, like Mark and Orna, there seemed to be significant development throughout the observations. It was mainly the thinking adult couple that the mother struggled to create and finally managed to make with the observer, that enabled the girl to benefit from the relationship with the observer to the extent that she did. As has been pointed out, the pre-condition for the process by which the girl tries to exclude the mother while pairing with the father can facilitate growth only as long as it does not damage the parents' relationship. The pre-condition for this: the mother's capacity to hold the father in her mind as her partner and hence not feel overwhelmingly rejected, did not exist at the beginning of the observations. Neither could Shanti hold the observer as her adult partner in the context of the observations. The mother felt rejected and hurt and in order to avoid the conflicts involved in the triangular relationships that the girl was exploring, she pushed Ann to dyadic pre-Oedipal relationships. In addition, due to her shaky Oedipal resolutions the mother tended to use the girl's objects to contain the mother's envy, jealousy and Oedipal anxiety, and to deal with it within the girl. The results of the above constellation were: (1) the girl lost the protective pre-Oedipal image and could not feel safe in her Oedipal explorations with Father as it was reflected in her relationship with the observer. (2) The Oedipal anxiety of both mother and girl could not be transformed to a matter that could be thought of.

All of this resulted in an inability to pass beyond the very concrete Oedipal phantasies which were then experienced as very dangerous phantasies against which the mother felt bound to set up rigid boundaries. Gradually as observations proceeded Shanty joined Ann in creating triangular situations, rather than fragmenting them, and started competing

with the girl for the observer's attention . She then became able to support Ann's explorations in pairing with the observer, approving those explorations . She finally managed to create with the observer a strong link as her adult partner and she could allow Ann to explore things in her relationship with the observer without the anxiety that the girl would destroy the couple's relationship . This new notion in Mother's mind enabled Ann to find Mother as a pre-Oedipal figure and she seemed to be reassured that: (1) her Oedipal exploration would not destroy Mother and the couple; and (2) that Father would not destroy her in these explorations . When both Shanti and Ann experienced the real couple as consisting of Mother's relationship with the observer, it was possible for Shanti to take adult responsibility and to support Ann in mourning the loss of the phantasy that she would have an exclusive relationship with Father. In turn, Ann seemed to manage to incorporate in her mind that object that she had lost and to integrate it into herself , while putting together a parental couple making love via music .

It was the link with the observer as an adult partner that Mina's mother had not managed to form. Mina seemed to incorporate a father figure in her mind but unlike Ann it was the integration of this figure into herself that she did not manage to achieve. Susan had not taken an adult responsibility in supporting Mina's attempts to process the absence of the father. At the beginning of the observations both Susan and Sita attempted to block Mina from thinking about the father . When Mina created triangular situations, Mother physically withdrew herself and moved out of the room. This led to a sense of a disaster for Mina's integration of the gender identification. When Mina explored triangular relationships there seemed to be a sense that her mother had an internal father to whom she was relating and to whom Mina was not allowed to relate . Hence, those explorations had in them a quality of stealing this very internal father figure which Mina seemed to feel deprived of, and actually was deprived of. Thus, whereas Ann at the initial stages of the observations seemed to exclude Mother as she was pairing in phantasy with Father, Mina seemed to steal from Mother the internal father figure with whom she was not allowed to make a link (Ogden, 1992). One may say that in this respect Susan formed with Mina an envious link of love (- L), (Bion 1962), similar to the envious link of

knowledge in the case of Lily and Karen. This type of link may explain the girl's feeling that the observation ended because Mother wanted it and her feelings that a "triangle" could not exist (Appendix A, p. 82).

#### 10.24 The actual presence of a third person

The presence of a male observer seemed to facilitate a process of change in the case of Ann and Rubi. In the case of Lily it seems that such a process did not take place and the factors that played a role in this impasse were discussed earlier.

It seems that the presence of the observer was necessary for Shanti to reach the point where she did not feel overwhelmed by Ann's Oedipal explorations. Similarly, it was necessary for Ann to have the presence of the observer to arrive at the point where she gave up the phantasy of having an exclusive relationship with "father". In this respect it was similar to Orna's and Mark's development through their relationship with the observer though the difference is that in Ann's case it was a development in a specific area whereas in Mark's case it was a much wider process.

The necessity of the presence of the observer for the development to occur was less evident with Batya and Rubi. Still, as has been pointed out earlier, the presence of the observer seemed to have an effect on the working through of the separation difficulties by both Rubi and Batya. There seems to be a similarity between the above and the physical separation that had been facilitated by the presence of the observer in the case of Karen and Tina.

The effect on the families of a reflective observer was discussed earlier. Here we would like to extract a particular aspect of this reflection. As mentioned earlier, once a process of development is under way a question seems to arise: "what's happening?". But that which is in the process of acquiring shape and meaning is inherently nameless, indescribable and this is experienced by both the parent and the child as an intolerable threat. Bion (1962) referred to this type of un-named anxiety as "nameless dread". It is the observer who contains this anxiety and processes it by thinking and eventually by the naming, which is introducing a symbol into the experience.



It seems that the introduction of meaning into the experience enables the child and the mother to separate from the experience. Thus the observer helps both mother and child to create a vantage point in relation to their experience. There is another sort of anxiety involved in the above process. In order to create and then name a new order, one has to separate from a former order and its knowledge. The containment of these anxieties by the observer seems to play a central role in the developments that took place in the observations of the six families. That might explain the necessity of the actual presence in reality of a third figure capable of being reflective to activate the potential for change both of the mother and child.

#### 10.241 The effect of siblings.

Deriving from the study of the comparison group it seems that size of family and presence of siblings were important factors. In the observations where only three people were present, the dynamics of the relationships were more intense in comparison with situations where there were four or five people. Thus in situations of three people there seemed to be a need for an auxiliary object in the distribution of projections. Lily used her link with Luke as a shelter from the mother's projection. Rubi at times used his link with Gill to identify with Gill's internal father figure. Ann found a base of support in Pearl as they were competing with their mother and then marginalising their own rivalry. Of the single parent families, Orna and Mark had the group that fulfilled a similar function and Karen had a base of support and a refuge in her siblings in resisting Mother.

#### 10.242 Gender identity

For the children of the comparison group families gender identity appeared to develop within the acceptable range of normality.

#### 10.243 The combined parental figure

The aspects of this object were not as evident with the comparison group children as they were with Mark and Mina.

In Lily's case it was mainly the aspects of the primitive combined object as described by Klein (1932) that were evident as they were reflected in the parents' treatment of Lily. This is not surprising considering the parents' immaturity, reflected in the part object relationship that they formed with each other (the idealised figure of themselves that they projected onto each other) and with Lily. (The denigrated aspects of themselves that they invested in the girl). In this respect there is a great similarity to Karen's relationship with Tina.

With Ann the link between the parents was a critical factor, and its recovery in the mother's mind was crucial to further development. It was the existence of this link that enabled the child to do her Oedipal exploration safely as she felt that once the link was established she could not damage the couple relationship. This was the opposite to Mina's feeling that she had caused irreparable damage to the "perfect container".

With Rubi there seemed to be a loose link between the parents, due to the inadequacies within their relationship, and it was reflected in the difficulty of managing the transition to Father once he had separated from Mother. It was the mother in the father's mind that he did not manage to find in his relationship with Simon and it was the mother in the observer's mind that he managed to make a link with that enabled him to recover the loss of the mother image while identifying with paternal aspects. This emphasised the functions of the combined parental figure as creating a space to contain the different identifications and a space where the child could feel contained by two parents.

### 10.30 Connections with the literature

It appears that the theory of the role of the father in early childhood is thin and underdeveloped. Clearly, our findings support Klein's view that pre-genital does not mean necessarily pre-Oedipal and with Ann, Rubi, Mark and Mina an elaboration of sexual Oedipal triangular relationships was evident. Klein's detailed description of the

child's psychotic anxieties linked to the primitive combined object find no echo in any of the children observed. Still, Klein described a situation which exists in the first three to four months of life, and the children observed in this research were all two years old, well past the stage of the depressive position (Klein, 1935). However, aspects of this object were reflected in the parents' treatment of the child in the cases of Karen and Lily.

### 10.31 The role of the father in the process of separation

This research supports the theories that see the "pre-Oedipal father" as a facilitator of the processes of separation and individuation (Greenacre, 1966; Burlingham, 1973; Mahler *et al*, 1975; Ross, 1979; Winnicott, 1950, 1960). Indeed our research documents in detail the dynamics of this process in a way that brings the concept vividly to life.

As we have seen in Karen's and Tina's case a process of physical separation in terms of the distance from mother seemed to take place during the first few observations. Karen managed to form a link with the observer, often introducing objects representing him between mother and herself at times of merging anxiety . She tended to do so at moments when she seemed to be experiencing depression and a feeling of being lost linked to separation . In her case the role of the father in the process of separation seems to be demonstrated as well in the absence of such a figure. It appears that neither Karen nor Tina had a third figure to whom to turn or another relationship into which to separate, once separation started taking place.

As we have seen in Mark's and Orna's case the observer became an important figure for Mark in the process of separating from the group and mother. The presence of the observer seemed to be essential to Mark in distinguishing himself from the group and in being able to explore the different parts of himself. The fact that the observer came to see him was probably experienced by Mark as giving him a defined place in the group. On another level, the observer being or representing the other, outside of the confining belt of the group and the dyadic relationship , seemed to be important in enabling Mark to explore the part of himself which is, and which wants to be, different from the group and from mother.

With Rubi, two aspects of the father's functions in the process of separation were highlighted. (1) The father as a person who contains and processes the anxiety of mother and child in the process of separation, thus introducing meaning into an unnamed experience. (2) Finding the mother in father. If this takes place the child can then manage the transition as he/she recovers the loss of the mother image and identifies with the father while holding on to his/her vulnerable parts rather than denying or projecting them.

With Lily the attempt to identify with the father as a way to separate from the mother and in particular to separate from the "silly cow" part of the mother was very evident.

With Ann the identification with father was also in the service of separating from the mother.

### 10.32 The containing father

Psychoanalysts from a variety of theoretical perspectives have analysed and categorised the concept of containment.

Bion (1967) and Segal (1989) see the father as a container for the projections of the bad aspects of the mother-infant relationships. Thus the father clears the way for a mutual idealisation in the mother-infant relationship, a critically essential state for a healthy development of the infant's personality, as described by Winnicott (1960, 1962).

Winnicott's concept of the father as a "protecting agent" (1950, 1960) assigns the father a similar function. This function of the father is well demonstrated in its absence in the Tina-Karen relationship. It is possible that an important contributing factor to the deterioration of their relationship, which ended by including sado-masochistic qualities, was the absence of a father who would contain the projections of the bad aspects of their relationship. In its presence this function of the father was well demonstrated in the cases of Mark, Ann and Rubi in the containment of the projected bad aspects, the containment of anxiety and the introduction of meaning via the observer's reflectiveness.

Winnicott (1944) mentioned briefly the father as representing the "indestructible environment". Meltzer (1973) describes elaborately the father's functions, as perceived

by the infant, that generate and constitute this indestructible environment. These functions are: (1) keeping order; (2) protecting the mother from the infant's phantasy attacks; (3) mending the mother and her internal babies from the damage caused to her by the infant's phantasy attacks.

Wisdom's notion of detachment (1976) refers to a specific quality of the father's containment that can be extended to the mother/infant relationship as a whole. Again this notion was well demonstrated by all the above cases. This aspect of the father's role is highlighted in Mina's search for a perfect-container which can mitigate the damage caused to it. Mina's experience of a retarded part of the self seems to be a result of the absence of this quality of the container. This supports Wisdom's model where, in the case of a girl, the lack of an adequate penis introject (orbital) would mean that she lacks something to have and with which to act.

#### 10.321 The combined parental figure as a containing object

The observations of both Mark and Mina well support Wisdom's hypothesis of difficulties in integrating a two-dimensional gender identity. The observations of Mark support Wisdom's hypothesis about over-stressed feminine identification and confusion regarding the properties of a penis introject in a case of a boy. Indeed, Mark's confusion about his gender identity was evident in the first three months of observations.

Britton's (1989) notion of a mental space within the boundary of the Oedipal triangle from the depressive position onward, is well supported by this research. Still, there is a difference between Britton's perspective and the perspective of our research. Britton describes the functions of the containing space of this object once the child has acknowledged the parents' relationship with each other and he does so in a clinical setting. Our research explores the importance of this space from a perspective in which the link between the external and internal parents did not exist or was not established firmly. It describes elaborately the development of this internalised space and its dynamics in the child's mind, with the significance for the child's personality development.

Here lies the most significant contribution of our research. It adds substance to Britton's notion and extends it in a way that has not been done so far.

Our research describes the creation of a vantage point in the containing mental space of the combined parental figure .

It is in the containing space that the parental couple creates that a vantage point is established. The vantage point creates a perspective in the mind. In order to achieve such a perspective the child must separate and remove him/herself. From this position the child can develop new sets of relationships and explore the relationships concerning the people involved in the creation of this space, him/herself included. Moreover, the vantage point seems to be essential for the child in the exploration of the different parts of him/herself in the process of becoming a separated individual. This mental space seems to function as a container, integrating the different parts of the self leading to an experience of completion and wholeness

### 10.33 The couple

The family can be looked at as a very small group presided over by the couple who carry out between them the functions of generating love, promoting hope, containing mental pain (generally referred to as anxiety) and thinking, all of them in the service of its main task: to facilitate the growth of the family's individual members (Meltzer, 1986). The children will be dependent upon the parents to fulfil these functions. The circulation of anxiety, operating in a form of a constant flow of projections between the members constituting a group, is part of the very nature of the features underlying any group (Bion, 1961; Gosling, 1981).

In the family group it is the function of the parents to contain and moderate the circulating mental pain or anxiety down to a level which will enable growth to take place. The anxiety of the dependent children will usually be projected on the mother probably because she is the primary and the first relationship for the baby at the beginning of life. The father would be the second in the line of this mental function of containment. Thus, the parental couple establish a linear sequence for the containment of anxiety. It can be

described as a sequence by which the child projects on to one parent and that parent projects to his/her partner that which had been activated in his/her mind by the child's projections. When the father is unable to receive the projections from the mother he then might become an object competing with her for the child's communication. If this takes place the containing space which is jointly created by the couple gets lost and this has consequences for the child's development. The child is then provided with the separated containing space of each parent. It seems that this was the situation with Ann's mother and with Rubi's mother when observations commenced. The vantage point is the place provided by the couple once they contain together the child's projections. It is this type of couple that the mothers formed with the observer in the case of Orna, Ann, Mark and Rubi. The couple's private space is perceived by the child as sexual, exciting and mysterious. This is already a projection of the child.

The presence of a baby in the family tends to evoke anxiety and confusion in the parents as to who is the chosen object of love. Until that moment the parents had been the love and sexual objects of each other. This situation is modified by the presence of the baby. It should be stressed that it is the father's confusion as well, not just the mother's. With some mothers there is at times a regressive mode of dealing with anxiety and in those situations the baby becomes a sexual object for her. The father can also suffer a similar process and will tend at times to focus all his attention and excitement on the child, leaving very little space in his mind for the mother. At other times the father might cut himself off from the family as a consequence of feeling rejected by the couple mother-baby. The mother is then left without an adult partner who would receive and contain her projections. The child also is then left without a link to an adult who would otherwise receive the projections stemming from the mother. This uncontained anxiety from the mother, if not contained by the father, will eventually be discharged onto the child. It is this function, (of containing anxiety) that the fathers did not fulfil well in the case of the comparison group children.

It seems that with Orna, Batya and Shanti, once they had created a couple with the observer and invested their own sexual phantasies in him, they developed a greater

mental space to receive the child's projections. In the absence of this function (one parent to the other parent) there seems to be a risk of an enactment of sexual phantasies by both, parent and child. This, for example, was evident in Lily's family when her parents did not contain each other's anxieties and Lily was used by Father in a sadistic (sexualised) way, (P - 311) while Mother was emotionally absent from this situation.

#### 10.4 Variables and Hypotheses

Most of the discussion in this thesis has been of variables which are internal and, in essentials, not operationally measurable. There *are* external referents but they function either as indicators ( e.g. sleeping difficulties in relation to separation)., or as precipitators, exacerbators ( the larger social context: e.g. no network of support). The detailed argumentation has been designed to illuminate, and make coherent and plausible, what might otherwise be seen as random and inexplicable.

Returning now to our hypothesis ( regarding fathers and separation) that we considered in Chapter 1, Section 1.17, we are now in a position to give a more detailed version of the original simple hypothesis.

We formulate our tentative conclusions below:–

(1) Father's presence can be described as a facilitator of good separation.

(2) The presence of Father is neither necessary nor sufficient for a good quality of separation.

It is not necessary since adequate separation can develop in a one parent family.

It is not sufficient, in that poor separation can develop in a two parent household.

(3) The absence of a father makes good separation more difficult to achieve, in that there are much heavier demands on the single parent.

(4) The presence of a father, even one who is often distracted and inattentive, makes good separation inherently much easier.



## 10.5 Themes for future research

- (1) One of the significant findings of this research is the importance of the link between the single mothers and the male observer. In order to validate this conclusion, it is important to follow the development of the infant in cases where the observer is a female rather than a male.**
  
- (2) A study of children of single fathers might further our understanding of the combined parental figure.**
  
- (3) A study of the role of the father via the exploration of opposites.**
  
- (4). A study of the same kind as the present one but with new born babies.**
  
- (5) A study focussing on differences between boys and girls growing up in single-parent families.**

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