

**THE LANGUAGE OF TENDERNESS AND OF PASSION.
Or The Place of Sex in Paradise: A Response to Gavin Miller.**

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What are the characteristics of living things—
At school, in biology I was told the following:
Excretion, growth, irritability, locomotion, nutrition,
reproduction and respiration. This does
not seem like a very lively list to me. If that's all
there is to being a living thing I may as well be
dead. What of that other characteristic prevalent
in human living things, the longing to be loved—
No, it does not come under the heading Repro-
duction. I have no desire to reproduce but I still
seek out love.
Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*

It is an honor to have been asked by Ralph Cohen to respond to Gavin Miller. My response will reflect my dual location in the humanities and in psychoanalysis; I hope it will reflect their consilience. Recognizing the truth of Freud's famous confession, that "before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms,"¹ I aver that the affective capacities that are analyzed in clinical settings in fact find their most profound expression in literature and other arts. It is, therefore, with some sense of a disciplinary failure that I see Miller turning to the plain speech of a psychiatrist to remind literary critics to "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say."² Yet I believe we have reason to hope that Miller's present contribution represents a good omen for the future of literary studies. For if, according to Toril Moi, the poststructuralist paradigm "is now exhausted," then Miller's revival of the neglected classic, *The Origins of Love and Hate*, by Scottish psychiatrist Ian Suttie (1889–1935), cuts through the "wall of ideas" barricading the academy and heralds a new language of tenderness in literary criticism. Moi announces that the voices of feminist theory "we all need to hear" will have to be "fresh and freshly convincing" if they are to usher in new theoretical paradigms.³ Miller, for his part, asks what would happen if the taboo on tenderness that holds academic discourse in its thrall was lifted. What would happen if "the reality of love" (667) were to inform the new literary histories of the twenty-first century? My response will consider Miller's question primarily in terms of how he uses the history of psychoanalysis to launch this challenge to contemporary literary criticism.

THE TABOO ON TENDERNESS

Susan Fraiman's exposure of the logic of "cool" in contemporary criticism and culture captures what Miller calls academic "machismo" (679). Drawing from the icons of contemporary criticism and film, this "mode of masculinity" takes as exemplar the "teen rebel, defined above all by his strenuous alienation from the maternal." Cool is "epitomized by the modern adolescent boy in his anxious, self-conscious, and theatricalized will to separate from the mother. And it goes without saying that within this paradigm the place occupied by the mother is by definition uncool. [Cool is] . . . characterized by a wariness of strong emotion in general and maternal fervor in particular—a drawing back from the intensity of mother love so sanctified

by the Victorians.”⁴ Miller points out that the roots of this repudiation of the maternal intertwine with the most conservative and oddly recalcitrant extremes of psychoanalytic thought. His essay reckons with the predominance of postmodernist versions of psychoanalysis, less in terms of its paradigmatic premises, and more in terms of its effects.⁵ Unlike Fraiman, who maintains her allegiance as a “good poststructuralist,”⁶ Miller rejects the appropriations of classical psychoanalysis —especially the “return to Freud” espoused by Lacanians— that marginalize the affection of early mother/infant bonds in favor of the oedipal drama. The “masculinization” of academic psychoanalysis denigrates that core relationship that provides the “psychic matrix” of all subsequent experiences.⁷

It would be fair to say, I think, that Miller “blames” the taboo on tenderness in theory and culture on the impact of Freud in modern life. Inspired by the pioneering thought of Suttie, Miller despairs that Freud was to become “no more a person / now but a whole climate of opinion” for the modern era.⁸ Miller rejects Freud’s drive theory, which holds that human life is motivated by the instinctual need to discharge stores of libidinal energy, thereby obtaining pleasure. For, he asks, what then happens to human love? The infant conceived of by Freud in his theories of child development is, by definition, a constitutionally solipsistic, hedonistic, and autistic creature. And, what is more, most academics act as if the relational turn that redefines this view of human origins and defines clinical practice today simply never occurred. They are says, Miller, out of step with the most fruitful and affectively enriching clinical research and practice of our times.

My own view is that Freud’s structuring of the oedipus complex within a strict gender hierarchy enforces an ambiguous resolution, especially for the little girl, and is itself a defensive formation that conceals his personal, pre-oedipal anxieties. His personal “blind spots” have been turned, in many instances, into hallmarks of classical theory. A full review of the clinical literature that describes, for example, the tenacity with which Freudians have variously retained and developed the imperative of the “normal” male’s “dis-identification” with the maternal falls outside the scope of this response paper.⁹ And although I think it is indisputable that postmodernist psychoanalysts have turned many such Freudian developmental directives into “touchstones of ideology,” I am not the one to analyze how this happened.¹⁰ What I would like to offer, however, is a rather different take on Freud’s “drive theory.” I would like here to draw attention to an ongoing clinical trend that might be characterized, ironically, as a “return to drive theory” in clinical psychoanalysis. My point will be that Miller’s essay is itself rather out of step with another movement in clinical psychoanalysis that seeks to avert the apparent excesses of the very relational turn so celebrated in his paper. In this current debate, object relations, the cornerstone of the relational school, is faulted for minimizing infantile sexuality, and, by extension, avoiding the sexuality of adult patients. My objective in pointing out this fresh debate in clinical literature is not to defend the conservative streak in psychoanalysis that Miller critiques, nor to justify the ways that drive theory has been venerated in postmodern discourse. My point, rather, will be to suggest that relational psychoanalysis *in practice* may itself exhibit a tendency to “taboo” the white heat of sexuality, and that this tendency may be identifiable in the rhetorical practices of Miller’s own paper as he follows relational tenets.

In what follows, then, I introduce the conflict around Freud’s “drive theory” biographically in the context of Freud’s history of anxiety about what he called the “oceanic feeling” of infantile merger. I suggest that the “sea change” of the relational movement came about through charting this territory of the mother/infant dyad that Freud avoided, but that relational psychoanalysis today has unfortunately tended to idealize that “baby love” and turned away from a full encounter with sexuality. My observation will be that, ironically, a parallel process is noticeable in Miller’s paper. Finally, I take up a classic essay by Sandor Ferenczi concerning the “language of tenderness and of passion” in order to reflect upon the place of sex in psychoanalysis, and the place of sex in Paradise.

THE OCEANIC FEELING

Anna Freud, in her forward to Marion Milner’s *On Not Being Able To Paint*, writes that “certain inhibitions to create are ascribed to a fear of regression to an undifferentiated state in which the boundaries between id and ego, self and object, become blurred. Owing to this anxiety, no ‘language of love,’ i.e.,

no medium can be found in which to ‘symbolize’ the individual’s pregenital . . . orgiastic experiences.”¹¹ Milner describes this state as an “unconscious hankering to return to the blissful surrender, this all-out body giving of infancy.” She uses art to produce in herself such “states that are part of everyday experiences in healthy infancy.”¹² These descriptions reveal the inaccessible mystery surrounding the pre oedipal baby and a conviction that regression to this preverbal state in an analysis is inherently more threatening than working at the level of the oedipal conflict. By contrast, Margaret Little describes her analysis with D. W. Winnicott as permitting a regression to this infantile state, a place to which her earlier analysis with a classically trained analyst would not venture.¹³ The descriptions of this “primitive” merger invoke the “oceanic feeling” identified by Freud in his correspondence with Romain Rolland as “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded —as it were, ‘oceanic.’”¹⁴ Accounts of the oceanic feeling provoked Freud’s resistance to such pre-oedipal, psychic regions. It took object relations theorists like Winnicott to provide the expectation that these regions could be explored within the psychoanalytic encounter. From its inception, however, psychoanalytic thought recognized the many different ways that artists, poets, and musicians tap into realms not dreamt of in psychoanalytic practice.

Matthew von Unwerth has recently written about Freud’s resistance to the ineffable in religious ecstasy, music, and art. Freud repeatedly, if defensively, insisted that he was impervious to the regressive pull of raw aesthetic experience. He remained chained to the mast of his rational mind, so fearful was he of the siren song of mystic merger, described by Goethe as the “eternal feminine.”¹⁵ The “dark continent” of the feminine, like the “essence of femininity” captured in the smile of Leonardo’s *La Gioconda*,¹⁶ consists of “reserve and seduction, the most devoted tenderness and a sensuality that is ruthlessly demanding —consuming men as if they were alien beings.”¹⁷ These well-known passages document Freud’s conflicts around femininity. But von Unwerth narrates the lesser-known origins of such fears of merger within Freud’s childhood despair and disappointment (FR 128). The teenage Freud, after a stinging rejection by the beloved young girl named Gisela, fiercely rejects “the sentimental feeling that left him vulnerable to the pain of heartache and, with it, the aesthetic Zeitgeist of his time, by which ... he was profoundly in (FR 71). Young Freud, suicidal, rejects what he calls the magical place of “poetry and fantasy” along with the “gruesome primeval past where wild creatures could consume oxygen of the atmosphere punished by man” (FR 72). “[A]s a brokenhearted teenager, ... he thought to kill himself, and then, in a wild change of heart, vilified the tender object of his affection with great cruelty, burying under his scorn the love that had so hurt him” (FR 79). Von Unwerth further observes, “So the adolescent Freud turned his energies to science, and professed himself closed to the palpable, sensual pleasures of art, sensible only of art’s appeal to the intellect” (FR 82). Escaping sentimentality, Freud inveighs against the miasma of breathless love, religious ecstasy, musical transport, and any other version of the oceanic feeling that might threaten his rational mind. Then as an adult he proclaims himself immune to the ecstasy and the catharsis, perhaps even the tenderness and love, dramatized by the poets —if he could not analyze their origins and their effects. “I am closed to mysticism,” confesses Freud to his friend Rolland, “as to music” (FR 201). “I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me” (FR 127). Freud thought the oceanic feeling was an “emotional relic of the dawn of life, a memorial feeling that preserved the inner world of the newborn” (FR 131). But such infantile symbiosis conjures fears of devouring more than delight.

The relevant point for my discussion of Miller’s paper is that the archaic landscape of infancy, so dreaded by Freud, has now become a veritable landscape of psychoanalytic adventure travel. One particularly brilliant example occurs in a pioneering essay by Alexander Stein discussing the myriad ways that the “consilience between music and mental functioning offers unrivaled access to the prerepresentational, preverbal, and nonlinguistic derivatives and elaborations of archaic experiences.”¹⁸ Music has been a rather neglected and mysterious domain for psychoanalysis, but in Stein’s interdisciplinary piece we see that, far from the autistic infant Miller derives from classical psychoanalysis, the “audio-phonetic” infant portrayed by Stein is capable of minute discriminations of sound and affect: “The audio-phonetic interaction between infants and parents is fantastically complex and may surpass the visual in developmental significance.”¹⁹ Relational practitioners who thus investigate the rich developmental processes of the pre-oedipal years offer

fresh conceptions of how generative the attachments of those years are for future love and creativity. Our recognition that the rigidity of Freud's drive theory originates in his own resistance to the pre-oedipal realm illuminates Miller's claim that academic discourse has unaccountably, and unfortunately, appropriated what he calls "unrealistic," "tough-minded," and unsentimental psychoanalysis (667). Yet Freud's ambivalence toward the "oceanic feeling" reveals the defensive rationalism buried in his determination to reduce all human experience to instinctual drive, and to turn away, as it were, from the mystery of the infant. The relational turn from such a reduced view of human nature inevitably evolved from a clinical psychoanalysis that was in practice far from the "tough-minded" theory privileged by Miller's postmodernists. But this emphasis on infantile attachment has risked compromising the very complexity of the infantile and adult sexuality expressed so radically in Freud's drive theory.

THE LOVE OF THE BABY

Miller credits Peter Rudnytsky for noticing that Ian Suttie's work contains "the kernel of virtually every idea elaborated by subsequent analysts."²⁰ But Miller does not highlight that Suttie was the first to see that the relational turn was inherent and inevitable in even the most classical clinical practice. Classical metapsychology, Suttie announces, is undermined by actual psychoanalytic practice.

I consider that even in the most "passive" therapy the patient's need for love is met in numerous and devious ways. What are the features common to all analytic treatment? I would characterize them thus. Imperturbability and perfect tolerance on the part of the analyst, his inexhaustible patience and unfailing interest in the patient's mental processes (highly reassuring to infantile anxiety), a ready memory and responsiveness of mind that makes the patient feel at one with the therapist and valued by him. . . . Though emotional sympathy (counter-transference) may be held in the strictest check, the *understanding cooperation* is, to suitable patients, a most convincing proof of love, in the sense in which I use the word.²¹

Miller neglects to notice that the movement from a theory of an exclusively drive-motivated infant who projects desire onto the mother to one of a mutually reflective bond between mother and infant parallels the shift in clinical practice from the analyst who receives the projections of the patient to a model of a mutually reflective relationship. The analytic dialogue depends upon the interaction of both analyst and patient in the same way as the union of mother and infant depends upon their mutual mirroring. And when there has been a failure of empathic attunement in the maternal/infant bond, this original failure of the "facilitating environment" is re-created in the transference, and thereby brought into the relationship of the patient with the analyst. These dual tracks are illustrated in Harry Guntrip's remark that he felt he had "an Oedipal rather than an object-relations analysis" with his first analyst because it did not reach down into the "primary love relationship" of the pre-oedipal years.²²

The analogy between the good-enough parent and the good-enough analyst are inescapable within the relational model of psychoanalysis. The danger, of course, of these kinds of metaphors of treatment, as of parenting, is that they risk idealizing both relationships. And it is a fair criticism of Miller's paper, I think, to point out that, following Suttie, he does idealize the maternal in a quiet "Victorian" way. The danger of that idealization, in turn, is that it risks denying the complexity, especially the aggression and sexuality, inherent in both relationships.

Feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin warns against the creation of a "counter-myth of a 'harmonious' maternal ideal" in our efforts to redeem the place of the mother in theory.²³ To resist such a countermyth, Benjamin develops the idea of "mutual recognition" between infant and mother that takes into account the need for both mother and infant to survive the "destruction" of the other. It is not necessary to disagree with Miller's insistence on the primary attachment of the infant to its mother to insist with equal conviction that within this early dyad, as within the analytical dyad, there will emerge difference, disturbance, and the impulse to destroy. Survival of such destructive impulses ensures the bonds of love. To create an opposition between the

human infant as, on the one side, autistic and undifferentiated from the mother and, on the other, as cognizant of the mother's difference, and seamlessly "attached," is to caricature real human life. Here again Benjamin is helpful: "I have too often found myself equally compelled by quite divergent accounts of the psyche from significantly different perspectives—for instance, at one point I am persuaded by the observational view that describes the infant's ability to differentiate self from mother; at another I am drawn to the clinical view that infantile experiences of agonizing, primitive fears occur at a point where loss of the other and loss of self are indistinguishable."²⁴ She references Michael Eigen's work to justify her "am biphilic tendency": "The Freudian baby and the Winnicottian baby are not identical. This doubleness points to the fact that no human baby is one baby. We do not know what to do with this multiplicity, but we are not free to evade it."²⁵

Poet Louise Erdrich renders a similar paradox in an essay she wrote some years ago for *Harper's Magazine* called "A Woman's Work." She writes not as an analyst or a literary critic, but as a mother of a newborn and a poet, and so in effect refuses the "either/or" of theory. Before her descriptions, I think, the analyst must lay down her arms.

[T]he love of an infant is of a different order. It is twinned love, all absorbing, a blur of boundaries and messages. . . .

One reason there is not a great deal written about what it is like to be a mother of a new infant is that there is rarely a moment to think of anything else besides that infant's needs. Endless time with a small baby is spent asking What do you want? What do you want ?... Her cries are painful to me, physically hard to take. Her cries hurt my temples, my breasts. I often cry along if I cannot comfort her. What else is there to do ?²⁶

The "what else" to do that Erdrich imagines shows the aggression inherent in such frightening and filling love. "Hormones, milk, heaviness, no sleep, internal joy all fuse in the first few months after a baby is born, so that I experience a state of tragic confusion. ... I am being swallowed alive. On those days suicide is an idea too persistent for comfort. 'There isn't a self to kill,' I think, filled with melodramatic pity for who I used to be. That person is gone" (WW 43). Love for her infant daughter pulls Erdrich away from fantasies of suicide. But, like Winnicott, she knows that there is "no such thing as a baby" without a mother. "I have made a pact with life: if I were to die now it would be a form of suicide for her. Since the two of us are still in the process of differentiating, since my acts are hers and I do not even think, yet, where I stop for her or where her needs, exactly, begin, I must dance for her" (WW 46). Erdrich's descriptions come as close as anything I have read to describing the "oceanic" intoxication of early merger. "My days here have become sensuous. ... I have been thrown into a joy of the body that is religious, that seizes me so thoroughly that the life of the imagination sometimes seems a spare place. ... At night I keep her close, sleep with her curled tight" (WW 42). And her sensual associations create a place for the "audio-phonetic" world of the infant that embraces the sexual swirl of what analysts call the "dyad." "[F]rom the pond, the rippling sexual sobs of wood frogs, the full-throated breath of the deep night, begin. It is a song so powerful I lie upon the bed pressed into the waves. The air throbs filled and running over. . . . The sound inhabits me, as if the dark passes into me, thrilling and complete. . . . Waking in the deep blackness, nursing a baby is the most sensuous of all animal tasks. All night I wake, feed our baby, sleep, wake again to the tiny body curled to me in the depth of that seething music" (WW 42). Altruism and eroticism are not, in such scenes, so far apart, nor need they be—for the analyst any more than for the poet. And it is not hard, at least for me, to imagine, as an analyst, a critic, and, indeed, a mother, that the baby thus passionately loved can look at her mother and, in her way, love her in return. Drive and attachment are surely met in such descriptions.

Gavin Miller's paper celebrates such love between mother and infant, to be sure. But he does not consider that such love flourishes amidst what Erdrich calls the "dark and stupid days" of sleep deprivation, sensuality, and self-loss that can ultimately lead to fantasies of self-destruction. Yet without such an acknowledgement of the bodily rage and despair that accompanies Erdrich's mystical—and sensual—infatuation with her baby, the tenderness that we celebrate can become a pernicious and controlling idealization.

Without delving into the debate as to whether the “primitive love impulse contains an irreducible core of aggressivity,”²⁷ I can nevertheless point out that Miller’s preoccupation with the importance of an altruistic or non-appetitive love, independent of instinctual drives, precludes his reckoning with the demands of those drives in his consideration of human experience. This is most apparent, I believe, in his attitude toward sexuality in general throughout his paper, and his determination, as it were, to keep “la chose genitale” entirely out of the discussion of infancy. In this, he follows Suttie who contends, contrary to Freud, that instead of instinct finding social sublimation in altruism and love, “the emotions borrow, as it were, the use of organs . . . and turn them temporarily to uses that are definitely social.”²⁸ And he cites Fairbairn to claim that the infant is “primarily object-seeking,” not pleasure seeking. But Fairbairn was later to posit a kind of “equality” of order between instinct and attachment in order to avoid just such “hypostatization of the notion of libido by saying that ‘it is the *individual in his libidinal capacity* . . . that is object seeking.’”²⁹ I stress Fairbairn’s attempt to put appetite and attachment in complementary positions here because Suttie’s reaction to Freud’s drive theory leads him to assert that the “need-for-companionship” “giving rise to parental and fellowship ‘love,’ [replaces] . . . Freudian libido, and [is] . . . genetically independent of genital appetite.”³⁰ Such positing of companionate love as existing in an independent track from the evolving psychosexuality of the infant is, in my estimation, itself misguided as it offers a “non-appetitive” region of human experience—a place of pure attachment, beyond or before sexual or even appetitive urges.

What is important, again, for the purposes of this discussion, is where such exclusivity has taken psychoanalysis. At issue is the compatibility of the two paradigms of the drive theory and attachment theory. As Marjorie Brierley framed the conflict in 1942, “One way of stating the problem before us is to ask the question: Is a theory of mental development in terms of infant object relationships compatible with theory in terms of instinct vicissitudes?”³¹ I do not attempt here to consider the “metaphysics” of such a question. But if Miller has decried the *effects* of the blind application of drive theory in academic discourse, so too I consider the *effects* of the relational turn in the last few decades in actual clinical practice. The impact of a predominant relational mode of practice in contemporary psychoanalysis has inflected what the analyst “looks for” and, by the same token, what the analyst does not “see.” The counter transference love that Suttie presciently shows undermining classical theories of the analyst’s neutrality itself risks becoming so idealized in the relational mode that it undermines the analyst’s encounter with the sexual and aggressive drives that inhere in the analytical relationship.

THE TABOO ON SEXUALITY

“What has happened to sex in psychoanalysis—” Relational analyst, Muriel Dimen, says that “sex” is “always confused.” “Sometimes, sexuality means heterosexual intercourse; other times polysexuality; still other times reproduction.” Sexuality ranges from genital excitement to the erotics of the entire body to orgasm to arousal. “It may connote a driving force or a psychic structure or a relationship.” Such confusion, for Dimen, is appropriately “recursive.”³² In the face of such multiplicity of meaning, it must be firmly stated that “sex” in psychoanalysis is only partially about what Miller colorfully calls the “hedonism of sexual congress.”

Suttie claims that in contemporary culture “men have substituted sex for intimacy,” and Miller contends things have only gotten worse: “dazzled by the hedonism of sexual congress, we overlook the concomitant expression of tender emotions” (677). Though I am sympathetic to Miller’s point that sexual behaviors substitute in the lives of many men (and not a few women!) for intimacy, I do find the characterization of “sex” in his paper oddly one dimensional: sex, for Miller, seems only to denote adult sexual congress. His repeated references to “sex” and the “obsession with sex” are confusing to me as a psychoanalyst. Adult sexual congress, of whatever version, is only the tip of the iceberg, especially given the global warming of the contemporary scene. Human sexuality must be defined in terms of widely accepted notions of psychosexual development. And while the achievement of tenderness in sexual relationships may be a hallmark of successful adult attachment, how one defines these experiences is, of course, the “rub.”

Freud experienced a kind of epiphany when he heard the pioneer in the “body language” of hysteria,

Jean-Martin Charcot, proclaim, “C’est toujours la chose genitale.”³³ Today, such pronouncements must be met with both assent and dissent. It is wrongheaded to claim that Freud is all about “sex,” if what we mean by sex is the sort of exhibition and exploitation described by Miller. If, on the other hand, what we mean by “sex” is the psychosexuality inherent in child development, then I would say, with Freud, it —5 all about sex. These two realms of experience—neurotic or perverse sexual acting out in adults, and normal sexual feelings and forays of developing children—are not equivalent, as we shall discuss below in relation to the work of Ferenczi. Suffice it to say for the moment that one can affirm Suttie’s cultural analysis of the “taboo on tender ness” without inspiring, in the name of a fuller recognition of infantile attachment and maternal affection, a “return” to the Victorian child who is somehow exempt from erotic feelings.³⁴

It is a truth now universally acknowledged that the sexual lives of adults are, for better or worse, predicated upon their developmental experiences as children. If the infant reaches for the mother in its *libidinal capacity*, then the mother’s tender reciprocation, if it is “good enough,” provides the prototype of erotic bliss. “No one,” writes Freud, “who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast with flushed cheeks and a blissful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life.”³⁵ The sexual drives infuse other systems, functions, and impulses in the human infant; the ecstasies of the oral phase provide the foundation for normal development, even as trauma or deprivation at this foundational moment becomes predictive of later developmental difficulties.

In a paper delivered to the American Psychoanalytic Association, British analyst Peter Fonagy directed the attention of this largely clinical audience to the “open secret” that psychoanalysis today is “not all about sex.” “Current major theories of psychoanalysis place the crux of their clinical accounts elsewhere —principally in the domain of emotional relationships.”³⁶ While Fonagy does not dispute the needed “corrective” relational turn made so much of in Miller’s paper, he nevertheless cautions against a countertrend in clinical practice and publications that elides the mention of sexual feelings and fantasies in treatment protocols. His paper calls for a “return” to the interconnection between object relations and a biologically based understanding of human development. “Psychosexuality must also be rooted in sensorimotor embodied experience. An explanation that fundamentally sees the psychosexual as a symptom of object relations misses an essential aspect. Erotic experience is inarguably intensely physical, and the failure to incorporate this aspect, or the reduction of physical arousal to a social construction, appears to us to create a distorted and shadowy representation of human sexuality that cuts it off from its roots in bodily experiences.” Clinical writings have, according to Fonagy’s research, themselves fallen under a “taboo on sexuality” that colludes in a denial of the erotic body in “attachment saturated transferences.” The intense interpersonal exchanges within contemporary treatment scenes, so different from the blank screen dynamics of classical modality, foster erotic transferences that threaten the analyst with personal exposure. Countertransference vulnerability has created a need to keep the heat down in the consulting room. Fonagy favors a “return to drive theory” at least as far as it retains the complete, psychosexual body at the core of the analytic treatment. To do less is to miss the “full emotional implications of psychic conflict” and the “sexualisation” of those conflicts in the analytic transference.³⁷

Following André Green, who was perhaps the first to raise the question of the disappearance of sexuality in the “nice and warm” treatments of the relational schools,³⁸ Dimen likewise asks, “What happened to the heat?” (SIP 157). Dimen offers a unified version of attachment with the psychosexuality of childhood. “Corporeal erotogeneity . . . flames as much from relatedness as from body chemistry (or epigenesis). Likewise, psychosexual stages —oral, anal, and phallic, genital, and so on— are not just corporeal but also interpersonal moments” (SIP 156). And Dimen sets “libido,” as a one-person, “masculine” model of desire with discharge as the ultimate goal, against what she terms “lust,” a two-person model of relatedness that in a more “feminine” manner enjoys the penultimate moment of peak excitement, the pleasure of “having” sex prevailing over mere discharge. In this she strives to show that the inevitable imbrication of libido with relatedness itself constitutes a new paradigm that holds the two in reciprocal union. “As relatedness, we now think, may nurture desire ... so the suspended state of unconsummated desire might reciprocally hold relatedness” (SIP 172). The abstinence of the analytic relationship mirrors the abstinence of the good-

enough parent who, like the analyst, may be the object of the infant's unfolding and maturing sexuality but may never act upon or invade such tenderness with his or her own passions. "This state of suspended animation" —where sexual desire is experienced but not enacted— is the "gift of the incest prohibition: the creation of intimacy in which, as Freud might have put it, undischarged libido generates the connective power of love" (S7P171).

What seems to me important in the work of these analysts who have recently taken up the question of the place of sexuality in the psycho analytic encounter is how they each strive to overcome the unnecessary opposition between the drive theory and attachment theory in the interests of more successful practice. For in overcoming this opposition there unfolds the possibility that sexuality and love can be integrated in our analytic formulations as well as in the lives of our patient.

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES IN PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITION

Ferenczi's "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child: The Language of Tenderness and Passion" is the urtext in the debate over classical and relational attitudes to sexuality. Breaking with Freud, Ferenczi courageously drew attention to how the passions of adults can exploit and overwhelm the tenderness of children. Adults' abuse, mis understanding, and deceit of the child foreclose the optimal fulfillment of the child's psychosexual destiny. Ferenczi's description of the impact of trauma is unmatched:

These children feel physically and morally helpless, their personalities are not sufficiently consolidated in order to be able to protest, even if only in thought, for the overpowering force and authority of the adult makes them dumb and can rob them of their senses. *The same anxiety, however, if it reaches a certain maximum, compels them to subordinate themselves like automata to the will of the aggressor, to divine each of his desires and to gratify these; completely oblivious of themselves they identify themselves with the aggressor. . . .* [T]he attack as a rigid external reality ceases to exist and in the traumatic trance the child succeeds in maintaining the previous situation of tenderness.³⁹

Now changed, says Ferenczi, the child becomes "enormously confused" and "his confidence in the testimony of his own senses is broken."⁴⁰ Such confusion of tongues keeps the child in bewildered, guilty, and thwarted submission to the adult. Ferenczi makes plain the effects of intergenerational transgression and trauma. And it is this context, finally, that makes the subject of Miller's paper more than, as he puts it, a parlor game for academics (679). For if we listen to Ferenczi explore the destruction of the language of children's tenderness by the violent passions of adults, we may wonder if the ban on tender feelings in theory and culture reflects, under the cool cover of indifference, a denial of the reality of transgression and trauma. It covers over authoritarianism and submission in the analytical relationship, in the parent-child relationship, and perhaps even in academic discourse.⁴¹ In fact, the history of Ferenczi's monumental contribution to the literature of psychoanalysis is itself fraught, rather shamefully, with the efforts of Freud to suppress its findings.⁴² A discussion of this controversy goes beyond the immediate scope of this response piece. Suffice it to say that Ferenczi has come to embody for those in the relational tradition "not simply a complement to Freud, but a powerful alternative as well."⁴³

Ferenczi's "Confusion of Tongues" piece takes up the very question raised by Miller's essay on the "taboo on tenderness," namely, the extent to which the origins of love and hate can be found in the body of the infant. Writes Ferenczi, "This train of thought points only descriptively to the tenderness of the infantile eroticism and to the passion in the sexuality of the adult. It leaves open the problem of the real nature of this difference. Psycho-analysis willingly agrees with the Cartesian idea that passions are brought about by suffering but perhaps will have to find an answer to the question of what it is that introduces the element of suffering, and with it sadomasochism, into the playful gratifications at the level of tenderness."⁴⁴

In answer to this problem of the difference between child and adult sexuality, infantile tenderness and adult passions, Jean Laplanche posits a "general theory of seduction" whereby the adult's common care of the child is necessarily experienced as enigmatic and seductive. "The child attaches itself to the adult,

but because this relation is always accompanied by sexual messages, it is always more than and different from a relation of pure care and attachment. From its inception the relation is, in a structural manner, infected by the intrusion of an element that is foreign to it and that escapes both parties.”⁴⁵ Ironically, Laplanche’s language conveys in itself the idea that the sexual realm thus introduced by the care of the adult is diminished, even “dirty.” His word choice —unconsciously perhaps— conveys his attitude: attachment is “pure” while sexuality is “infected,” “foreign,” an “intrusion,” and, finally, an “escape.” Laplanche’s language underscores his point, however, because he insists that sexuality infuses all of our interactions, not the least of which, certainly, are our interactions with our children. Selma Fraiberg makes a similar point about the ways that parental care for children can create a context of love. Less “cool” in her discourse, perhaps, than Laplanche, this social worker turned child analyst, does not indulge herself in metaphors of enigmatic child seduction. Rather she describes how the practices of good-enough parenting allows children, in manageable doses, to learn about love.

During the first six months, the baby has the rudiments of a love language available to him. There is the language of the embrace, the language of the eyes, the language of the smile, vocal communications of pleasure and distress. It is the essential vocabulary of love before we can speak of love. Eighteen years later, when this baby is full grown and “falls in love” for the first time, he will woo his partner through the language of the eyes, the language of the smile, through the utterance of endearments, and the joys of the embrace. In his declarations of love he will use such phrases as “When I first looked into your eyes,” “When you smiled at me,” “When I held you in my arms.” And, naturally in his exalted state, he will believe that he invented this love song.⁴⁶

Child-analyst Ruth Hall elaborates on this passage, analyzing how the unconscious excitement of genital sexuality becomes experienced in the early care of the infant. In tolerable and appropriate proportions, the mother shares her pleasure in the body of the child with the child him- or herself. Hall calls this the “unity of purpose” shared by mother and infant alike. “[F]ound in the natural moments of daily care when the loving looks accompany the loving handling of the baby’s body, and blend together the intense pleasures of looking, touching (especially the genitals) and sharing of joy, [these pleasures] ... in later life will accompany the adult sex act and remove from it its animalistic connotations. This blissful state is re-experienced at orgasm and recreates briefly the sense of completeness that is infancy’s grand illusion.”⁴⁷ In the context of attachment, the stimulation of the body through normal care and feeding gains its association with tenderness and love. Children have sexual feelings appropriate to their tender age; adults mirror, modulate, and, to some extent, inaugurate their children into sexual love. It is in the parent’s abstinence that the child’s self unfolds. The mother’s restraint and containment allow for the child’s fantasy to develop. When applied to the psychoanalytic situation, the abstinence of analyst and patient inspires the pleasure of desire. Jody Davies makes explicit the connection between the analyst’s abstinence and the parents’ nurturing constraint of the child’s passions: “We all have sexual desires on which we do not act —places in which such actions would be inappropriate and wrong. As adults, we can desire without the promise of satisfaction; we can want without having to possess. Perhaps this is the true legacy of Oedipus —the capacity to sustain desire for what we can never have.”⁴⁸

Ferenczi’s personal history of sexual abuse, and his work with patients who had been abused as children, fostered a determination to establish the clear boundaries between the “languages” of child and adult sexuality. He neither denies children’s bodily nature, nor their nascent, evolving experience of their sexual feelings. What he insists upon, however, is their immaturity, their tenderness. As Rudnytsky illustrates, borrowing from the rich literary and theological tradition subtending all discussions of love and sexuality in the West at least since Plato, Ferenczi “recasts the opposition between agape and eros into one between tenderness and passion, and holds the former to be no less fundamental than the latter.”⁴⁹

My own conviction is that adult envy of childhood pleasures makes childhood bliss nearly intolerable to behold, particularly if the adult has felt excluded from or robbed of such joys. Innocent yet passionate

delight can only be enjoyed by the parent who is willing to forego his desire for revenge and let the passions of children grow into love by observing the one taboo —the taboo on incest— that still holds civilization together. This taboo ensures the reality of love. It has meaning, however, against the backdrop of attraction as well as abstinence. If we do not respect that the child's matrix of development is sexual as well as affectionate, we run the risk of consciously or unconsciously ignoring the taboo that truly protects that development. This is the point I wish to stress: it is the denial of *sexual* vulnerability of children that leads to transgression against their tenderness. Ferenczi captures how the rationalizations of traumatic transgression are buried in our "cool" constructions of indifference: "Almost always the perpetrator behaves as though nothing had happened, and consoles himself with the thought: 'Oh, it is only a child, he does not know anything; he will forget it all.'"⁵⁰ Denial of sexuality, like denial of tenderness, leads to repression from which inevitably flow the covert gratifications of perversions, obsessions, hysterias, and even, in some cases, psychoses.

DELIGHT AND DESIRE

In his classic study of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Stanley Fish points to the ways that Milton's poem "surprises" the reader with an apprehension of his "fallen" ways of reading and knowing. A *tour de force* of literary criticism, *Surprised by Sin* captures the predicament of humanity's relationship to good and evil, innocence and experience.⁵¹ The book of Genesis shows God walking with Adam in the cool of the evening: the Garden is filled with delight. Yet Fish points out that the very language Milton uses to capture the innocence and delight of our first parents necessarily contains the residue of contamination. Since all humanity has fallen, Milton's conceptions and perceptions of innocence must likewise be fallen. Unlike Laplanche, who seems unaware of the Puritanical streaks in his own prose, Milton the Puritan poet, adroitly uses the "fallen" quality of his discourse to crack the hard-heartedness of his sinful reader. The lyrical evocation of the "prelapsarian" harmony of Eden already shows the fractures of discord. This is nowhere more apparent than in Milton's depiction of the prelapsarian sexuality of Adam and Eve. Milton's couple—in keeping with the Genesis account—enjoys "wedded bliss." The pleasures of their sexual congress are venerated by Milton. The reader, however, must anxiously strive to measure the distance between herself in her sinful state and the reality of innocence rendered in the poem. "Consider," says Fish, "the embrace we witness at book 4, line 492:

with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unprov'd,
And meek surrender, half embracing lean'd
On our first Father, half her swelling Breast
Naked met his under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid; hee in delight..."

The "almost cinematic" technique of mounting movement conjures in the reader the immense excitement implicit in the consummation about to follow. "[But] the response these lines draw from the reader . . . must be distinguished finally from what Adam and Eve feel as they embrace. The poem is quite explicit, in a negative way, about this: Eve's eyes draw a 'conjugal attraction' which is 'unreproved' and not passionate; these are 'kisses pure' (502) we are told *after* our impressions have been registered." The reader has a body and mind infected by sin. Thus, "[w]hen the verse turns to describe *Adam's* response to Eve's swelling breast and loose tresses, there is a tendency (and classroom experiments bear this out) to read 'hee in desire where the poet writes 'hee in *delight*.'"⁵² After the Fall, in book 9, line 1013, "where this scene is echoed, desire is unequivocally desire; the qualities the fallen reader *imposes* on Adam and Eve in book 4 have become theirs by right: 'Carnal desire inflaming, hee on Eve / Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him / As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn.'" ⁵³

I bring up Milton's epic of humanity's loss of innocence to help us think about the vexed place of sex in psychoanalysis. Eden in Hebrew means "delight" —our first home, according to Milton's poem. It is a place of pleasure and tenderness; not yet a place of fallen "passion." My suggestion is that Milton, like Ferenczi, is trying to imagine sexual it's without the "ebullition" of violent desire. And of course he cannot, because the language used to capture innocence bears the mark of sin and death, just as surely as, according to Laplanche, the child's tender sexuality is forever marked with the "enigma" of adult passions. But, as Milton's poem enjoins, the fact of the reader's sinful regard does not take away from the reality of Adam and Eve's innocent delight. It merely convicts the reader, and creates a heightened awareness of his need for redemption. Adam expresses his delight in Eve with "kisses pure": the kisses reflect spiritual as well as physical unity. The reader suffers the difference between his experience and Adam's. That difference is underscored by the appearance of Satan at the moment of bliss:

aside the Devil turn'd
For envy, yet with jealous leer malign
Ey'd them askance. (502-504)

Fish points to the importance of self-knowledge in reading. The reader may long for innocence but must recognize that however he may admire, even envy, Edenic bliss, it is lost to him forever. Milton's poem tries to instruct the reader to reckon with his fallen state so that he may aspire to reclaim some semblance of lost innocence and delight in the redemption of biblical truth and memory. What, then, is the hope for the psychoanalytic reader?

If we can translate some of the wisdom of the poem into the current debate surrounding the place of childhood sexuality in human development, we might suggest that our own failure to appreciate the delight of the infant in his or her own body, and in the fantasies engendered by the parent's careful ministrations, is something like the rage and envy of Satan in the Garden. Satan recognizes innocent pleasure, and it provokes him to furious seduction. Are our furious efforts to turn the baby into either a solipsistic hedonist or, alternatively, a seraphic creature of pure and primary attachment, merely entrapments— When, like Satan, we behold the closest thing to paradise we have ever known do we intuit the place of true and perfect omnipotence in the womb, and narcissistically rage at what we have lost?⁵⁴ The confusion of tongues within psychoanalytic discourse may mask a cool attempt to bring controversy, separation, and despair into the imagined pre-oedipal Eden of the infant. "Fallen man's perceptual equipment, physical and moral, is his prison; any communication from a world beyond the one he has made for himself reaches him only after it has passed through the distortions of his darkened glass, and this applies to man's prior state in Paradise as well as to the Heaven he has never known."⁵⁵ Milton never imagines that his inability to speak "purely" of Paradise precludes his poetic call to render it, any more than it prevents the reader's apprehension of his inspired poem. Our conceptions of infancy's tenderness are forever structured by the limitations of our language. They bear the mark of adult passions. But that does not mean that our conceptions are not both testable and experientially true.

Gavin Miller is right to draw our attention to the unfortunate effects of the taboo on tenderness, that, like the taboo on sexuality, forecloses the union of sex and tenderness in the reality of love. My hope would be that we not banish from the scene of maternal/infant delight the sexuality from which it was literally born.

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Volver a Artículos sobre Ferenczi
Volver a Newsletter 28-ALSF

Notas al final

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- 5.- Joel Whitebook discusses the "surfeit of epistemology" in contemporary psychoanalytic controversies and the critique of "foundationalism" therein in a recent discussion of Hans Loewald. Whitebook, "Hans Loewald: A Radical Conservative," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 85 (2004): 97-116. Refer also to Lewis Aron, *A Meeting of the Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis* (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1996).
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- 19.- Stein, "Sound of Memory," 64.
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- 22.- Rudnytsky, *Psychoanalytic Vocation*, 123. Referring to Jerry Jacobson, "Developmental Observation, Multiple Models of the Mind, and the Therapeutic Relationship in Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 62 (1993): 526-30, who describes the move from a "one person" to a "two-person" model of psychoanalysis as a process paralleled in theories of infant development and experiments in infant observation.
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- 27.- Rudnytsky, *Psychoanalytic Vocation*, 106.
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- 31.- Marjorie Brierley, "Internal Objects and Theory" (paper, the British Society, February 18, 1942), quoted in *The Freud-Klein Controversies 1941-1945*, by Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner (London: Tavistock, 1991), 926.
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- 33.- Rudnytsky, *Psychoanalytic Vocation*, 203
- 34.- Miller, who skeptically draws upon Jacqueline Rose's explication of Lacan's notion of the "Real," might well consider her study of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* for an analysis of Victorian denial of children's sexual natures. Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).
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- 36.- Peter Fonagy, "A Genuinely Developmental Theory of Sexual Enjoyment and Its Implications for Psychoanalytic Technique" (plenary lecture, Winter Meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, New York, NY, 2006).
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- 38.- André Green, "Has Sexuality Anything To Do with Psychoanalysis—" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 1b (1996): 871-83

- 39.- Sándor Ferenczi, "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child: The Language of Tenderness and Passions," in *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-analyses*, ed. M. Balint, trans. E. Mosbacher (1933; New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1980), 163-65.
- 40.- Ferenczi, "Confusion of Tongues," 162.
- 41.- Christopher Bollas describes the countertransference in terms that mark him as an heir to Ferenczi: "When the father violates the child, the child can no longer play with her father in her mind. He terminates the imaginary. Just as the patient's heavy declaration [of abuse] ends my right to imagine my patient in many ways. . . . No! I must stick to . . . the actual event. It is to dominate, control, and centre the analysis. This transfer is startlingly close to the patient's experience of the father's abuse." Bollas, *Forces of Destiny: Psychoanalysis and Human Idiom* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronsdale, 1989), 179-80.
- 42.- A. W. Rachman, "The Suppression and Censorship of Ferenczi's Confusion of Tongues Paper," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1997): 459-86.
- 43.- Rudnytsky, *Reading Psychoanalysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002), 109
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- 46.- Selma Fraiberg, *Every Child's Birthright: In Defense of Mothering* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 29.
- 47.- Ruth Hall, "Sexuality: Its Beginnings" (unpublished paper, Cleveland Center for Research and Child Development, 1975),
- 48.- Jody M. Davies, "Between the Disclosure and Foreclosure of Erotic Transference Countertransference: Can Psychoanalysis Find a Place for Adult Sexuality—" *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 8 (1998): 776
- 49.- Rudnytsky, *Reading Psychoanalysis*, 140.
- 50.- Ferenczi, "Confusion of Tongues," 163
- 51.- Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971
- 52.- Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 105.
- 53.- Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 106.
- 54.- Ferenczi, "Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality," in *Sex in Psychoanalysis* (1913; New York: Basic Books, 1950), 219, 225: ". . . there is a stage in human development that realizes this ideal of a being subservient only to pleasure, and that does so not only in imagination and approximately, but in actual fact and completely. I mean the period of human life passed in the womb. In this state the human being lives as a parasite of the mother's body. ... If, therefore, the human being possesses a mental life when in the womb, although it would be foolish to believe that the mind begins to function only at the moment of birth—he must get from his existence the impression that he is in fact omnipotent." This is the place to which, says Ferenczi, we long to return, and have glimmers of in our sleeping state and in our dreams.
- 55.- Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 104