

An overview of the Practice of Psychoanalysis in France in the Days of Surrealism

(Lecture)

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Firstly, I would like you to forgive my accent in English. It may cause you some problems, along with my pronunciation of French names; for it is often in this area that we come across the greatest differences between languages. So please, not hesitate to raise your hand if you wish me to stop and repeat something that may have eluded you. I apologise, too, for reading my text, something I do not do when I express myself in French, as I prefer to speak more freely... But, alas, I am unable to do this in your language.

I am going to offer you a rapid outline of the practice of psychoanalysis in France in the days of Surrealism; first, in the hospital setting, and then in private practice. This is not an easy task since there remains little evidence indicating what actually happened during this period. Freud's ideas, which had long-since been rejected and forgotten on account of the First World War, had infiltrated the French medical world with difficulty, and they had created a sensation in society and considerable turbulence in the media, which discredited them in many people's eyes. Our friends, the Surrealists, are a case in point, for the publication by André Breton of the *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924 coincided with the beginnings of the French psychoanalytic movement.

The latter had begun in 1920, with the first French translation of one of Freud's works, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910a), but only acquired institutional legitimacy with the founding, in November 1926, of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society. In 1925, Freud was thus able to write in his

Selbstdarstellung [An Autobiographical Study] that “in France the interest in psychoanalysis began among the men of letters.”¹

There was an analysis of Ferenczi and of Freud – who, moreover, had little liking for him. She had studied French literature in France and wanted to return there and settle in Paris. She arrived in 1921 at the age of 37. Her name was Eugénie Sokolnicka, and she was to become the first training analyst, Freud’s official “ambassador” in Paris. There she rediscovered a literary milieu she was already familiar with, in particular, that of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and she organised discussion meetings centred around Freud’s ideas. André Gide had four or five sessions of analysis with her before transforming her, in 1925, into the character of Doctor Sophroniska for his novel *Les faux monnayeurs* [The Counterfeiters].

Gide’s correspondence with his friend, Mrs. Dorothy Bussy, James Strachey’s sister, tells of the craze spawned by analysis. For example, on the 17th of February 1922 he wrote: “The Freud sessions that I told you about, are prodigious and are more interesting than anyone could have hoped.” Meanwhile, in his *Journal*, he notes his thoughts, such as these, on the 4th of February 1922: “Freud, Freudianism... I’ve been practicing it without realizing it for ten, fifteen years.”² Two years later, he was to be even more vehement: “Ah! How annoying Freud can be ! And it seems to me that we would have discovered his America without him ! (...) He provides us especially with audacity; or more precisely, he dismisses a certain kind of false and awkward modesty. But there is so much absurdity that goes along with that imbecile of genius!”³

¹ Freud, Sigmund. (1925d [1924]. "Selbstdarstellung", L.R. Grote (dir.), *Die Medizin der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, vol. IV, Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1923-1929, pp. 1-52; G.W., XIV, pp. 31-96; S.E., XX, pp. 7-70; " 'Autoprésentation' ", OCF. P, XVII, pp. 51-122.

On another level, André Breton visited Freud, whose writings he discovered during the First World War, in October of 1921. To his great disappointment, he discovered “a little, unassuming old man, who practices out of his poor, neighbourhood doctor’s office.” And yet, he was to be, in the following years, an ardent defender of Freud’s work, even at the price of misunderstandings, as his book *Les Vases Communicants* bears witness. Freud was to have a hard time clearing them up eleven years later.

Soon after her arrival, Sokolnika was introduced by the novelist, Paul Bourget – who was very famous at the time – to Professor Georges Heuyer, who invited her to conduct psychoanalytic consultations with patients in his department at Sainte-Anne’s Hospital. Even though she had difficulty fitting into this medical milieu, it allowed her to forge contacts with young psychiatrists who were longing to shake up the fusty ideas of the time concerning the mentally ill. This was not an easy task; for, according to certain of their elders, like Dr Trepsat, an atmosphere of suspicion prevailed. I quote him :

“ I consider that in the presence of a patient (at least, one of French or Latin origin), one must do psychoanalysis without proclaiming it from the rooftops, without telling the patient himself; one must always have this therapeutic procedure in mind and use it sometimes, but one must never speak about it.”²

Those who were to be the pioneers of psychoanalytical practice in France were effectively young. For if people of letters publicized its theoretical applications, its practice would be slower in coming and would first appear in hospital psychiatric wards with interns or young assistants.. Thus it was in the context of the psychiatric hospital setting that analytic practice began. Dr René Laforgue was one of the first to show interest in it. As he was born in Alsace, part of France taken by the Germans after the war of 1870, he was bilingual and able to read Freud in its original text as early as 1913. He established himself in Paris in 1922. He was the first to undergo a training analysis, for a

² Trepsat, C. (1923). Traitement d'un tiqueur par la psychanalyse. *Le progrès médical*, 1922.

few months, with Eugénie Sokolnicka, though it was apparently rather turbulent. He was only 29 years old at the time. Another doctor, René Allendy, was 34, but underwent an analysis with him for three years, which did not prevent them from writing articles and books together. Eugénie Sokolnicka also received another hospital practitioner, Dr. Edouard Pichon, for an even longer analysis, as well as the first child psychoanalyst in France, Sophie Morgenstern.

Along with other enthusiastic young doctors, they applied the analytic “method” prolifically to their hospitalised patients, encouraged by their new section head, Professor Henri Claude, who, in 1923, made a flattering presentation of the excellent results they had achieved:

“OBS I - Obsessions of an impulsive character with a latent homosexual background. Cured. Length of treatment: three months.

OBS II - Melancholic depression, obsessive ideas, feminine frigidity. Cured after two and a half months of treatment. (...)

OBS IV Masculine impotence in an impulsive obsessive patient. Cure, four months. (...)

OBS VI - Impulses, feminine frigidity. Cure, six and a half months.”³ etc.

Notwithstanding these miraculous results, Henri Claude made no secret of his reservations with respect to Freudism and declared, for example, in 1924 :

“Psychoanalysis is not yet adapted to the exploration of the French mentality. Certain investigative procedures which offend the delicacy of intimate sentiments and certain extremely symbolic generalisations, which are perhaps applicable to other races, do not strike me as appropriate in a “Latin clinical context”.”⁴

He was not the only one to reason in this way and one can understand Freud’s reactions of dismay upon reading these constant allusions to “races”, other than the French or “Latin” race – that is to say, the Jewish races, no doubt, but also “German, Germanic” races – which, during these years

³ Claude, Henri. (1923). La psychanalyse dans la thérapeutique des obsessions et des impulsions. *Le Paris médical*, 20. 10. 1923.

⁴ Laforgue, René & Allendy, René. (1924). *La psychanalyse et les névroses*, preface by Pr H. Claude. Paris: Payot.

following the butchery and hatred of the First World War, accepted without shame “this series of affirmations concerning sexuality” that were so shocking.

Henri Claude was to drive the point home: a doctor must :

“overcome considerable revulsion at stirring up the mire which has been lying stagnant, at evoking images of repugnant coarseness (...). I demand, therefore, that this psychoanalytic practice, certain aspects of which are so shocking, remain strictly confined within the medical domain; and I resolutely exclude from these investigations anyone who is not imbued with that sense of responsibility to be found in any doctor worthy of the name. (...) The danger lies in carrying out the dangerous Freudian transference. ”⁵

Professor Laignel-Lavastine rang the same warning bell in his report entitled, “Freud, the Freudians,” in August, 1923 at the Congress of the Alienists and Neurologists of France and of French-speaking Nations. He called for a differentiation between :

“ the *Freudians*, conscientious physicians who are more or less disciples of Freud ” and “ *Freudianists*, sectarians of Freudism who are not medical doctors; philosophers, litterateurs, clergymen, schoolteachers, male and female, pedants, students of anything other than medicine, nurses, masseurs, old maids out for some sort of occupation, etc. who have been attracted to Freudism for different reasons. They may be able to obtain excellent results from the literary, philosophical or social point of view, but they may also sometimes use it to get across erotic ideas, look therein for a means to obtain easy success before the masses or take advantage of it to exercise as physicians illegally, which may have the worst consequences for the patient, and, by ricochet, for the reputation of psychoanalysis and of Freud himself.” He also added, “All in all, it’s a little bit like a repetition of the excess Mesmer’s tub produced after the discovery of hypnosis. ”⁶

The publications by psychiatrists in various medical journals show the increasingly frequent use of a method of questioning inspired by the psychoanalytic technique. In a style resembling classical medical “observations”, the cases were often serious, involving schizophrenic and psychotic patients; for psychoanalysis makes it possible to interpret the hidden meanings of their delusions or their behaviour.

And, then, one must not forget that, at this time, it cured !

⁵ Claude, Henri. (1924. 'Freud et la méthode psychanalytique'. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 24 May, 1924.

⁶ Laignel-Lavastine (1923), « Freud, les Freudiens », *La Presse Médicale*, 8 décembre 1923, p. 131-135.

As the years passed, the French psychoanalytic movement began to organise itself, with the creation, in 1926, of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society, and, in 1927, of the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*. Discussions on technique soon began, and two main tendencies emerged. There were those who wanted to free themselves of Freud's domination and to create "a psychoanalysis *à la française*", essentially linked to psychiatry; and there were those who wanted to remain under the leadership of the International Psychoanalytic Association and the norms of training and treatment established by the Psychoanalytic Institute of Berlin in 1920. They came together around princess Marie Bonaparte, whose analysis with Freud, starting in 1925, and social prestige, placed her at the head of the faithful (we should not overlook the fact that she was not a doctor). A split was narrowly avoided.

The dissensions troubling the international movement were not without their repercussions in Paris where, for instance, Otto Rank had formed friendly contacts and was to establish himself in the thirties after his break with Freud. Sándor Ferenczi had no less influence, and the "active technique" attracted more than one French psychoanalyst, starting with René Laforgue. On the contrary, Rudolf Loewenstein, who settled in Paris in 1925, at the age of 27, maintained, along with the princess, with whom he had a brief affair, an absolute fidelity to Freud and the criteria of the Berlin Institute. In the 1930's, he was to become the training analyst of Sacha Nacht, Jacques Lacan and Daniel Lagache, amongst other names that would become prestigious after the Second World War.

In fact, we know very little about private psychoanalytic practice in France between the two wars, since the principal writings of the period are in the form of classical medical observations rounded out by etiological interpretations. This is the case, for instance, of the article "Moments d'une psychanalyse", published jointly in 1933 by Blanche Reverchon-Jouve and her husband the

writer, Pierre-Jean Jouve, in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Dreams are discussed at length, but nothing is said of the practical conditions in which the patient was followed, nor of what is referred to today as the “setting”.

We can therefore only get an idea of how treatments unfolded from a few general remarks, or from the memories left by rare analysands. In terms of the generalities, a book by Raymond de Saussure, the son of the famous Swiss linguist, described in 1922 how

“the patient is placed on a chaise longue (note this detail), and the doctor sits behind him, in such a way that he cannot be seen. (...) Once the patient is comfortably settled, he is asked to say everything which crosses his mind”. The accent is placed on the psychoanalyst’s silence, which is necessary so as not to influence the patient by suggestion. If the patient becomes too irritated by this, “it is a good idea if, after a few sessions, the psychoanalyst gives his patient certain results, telling him about the general tendencies and centres of resistance that he has observed in him, and even, perhaps, revealing some of the causes of his neurosis”.⁷

In 1924, René Laforgue and René Allendy drew attention to other parameters, in particular,

“the delicate question of fees. At the hospital, where we treat patients free of charge, several have tried to trick us and misuse our time by prolonging their condition. (...) We have noticed that free analyses last longer, in general, than those that are paid for, and also – and this is an important fact – that they are less successful. (...) The means of paralysing these bad influences is to make the patient pay so that it is not in his interest to prolong the treatment; and this should occur on a monthly basis so that he does not attempt to cancel his sessions. It has to be made clear to him that every minute he loses is at his own cost, as well as each session cancelled. (...) We arrange our meetings in advance for the week and, as far as is possible, make no changes. A good many “simple cases of neurasthenia” can be cleared up within a few weeks of treatment; but, in complicated cases, one should never reckon on less than four months, not forgetting the eventual need for a prolongation. (...) The most favourable age is less than forty-five in women and before fifty in men. (...) The treatment of husband and wife together is not recommended; it is better to take them one after the other, otherwise one increases resistances needlessly.”⁸

On several occasions, Freud’s suggestion of doing a trial treatment for a few weeks is proposed – which René Laforgue refers to as an “analysis of investigation” – but this practice seems to have been completely forgotten nowadays.

⁷ Saussure, R. de (1922). *La méthode psychanalytique*. Preface by S. Freud, Lausanne and Geneva, Payot, 187p.

⁸ *ibid.* Laforgue, René and Allendy, René (1924).

In fact, the analyst whose practice we are most familiar with, as you will see, is Dr René Allendy. He was a rather strange character, fascinated by alchemy and homeopathy. With his wife, he founded a “Philosophical and Scientific Study Group for the Examination of New Trends” which organised lectures at the Sorbonne, thereby putting him in contact with men of letters, the Surrealists in particular. He had met René Laforgue at the Société de Théosophie and was in analysis with him for three years.

Memoirs concerning him speak more of psychotherapy than of psychoanalytic treatment in the strict sense. For example, René Crevel, who made fun of him in 1929 in *Etes-vous fous ? [Are you mad ?]*, explaining that he rejected the free association proposed to him as this “Oedipus complex” to which one wanted to reduce everything. He was one of the first, before he committed suicide in 1935, to draw attention to the thesis of Dr Jacques Lacan whom “ he had met through Salvador Dali and introduced into the Surrealist group. It was of him that he was thinking of course when, after noticing the senile condition Freud was in and the mediocrity of most of his followers, he made the following appeal for a regeneration of psychoanalysis: ‘But which young psychoanalyst will take on the mantle.’ ”⁹

Jacques Lacan was still practically unknown, but after he was elected adherent member of the Société Psychanalytique de Paris on the 20th of November 1934, he started up a practice for which there are few first hand reports. There is at least Georges Bernier’s testimony reported by Elisabeth Roudinesco. He was analysed by Lacan in 1939, before forming a real friendship with him.

“It was in a café on the Place Blanche that Lacan met the man who was to become his first and only long-time analysand outside the asylum. His name was Georges Bernier and he came from a Jewish family from Russia. He was then studying philosophy and was interested in modern painting, the avant-garde, new ideas. He saw Lacan sitting at André Breton’s table,

⁹ Carassou, M. (1992). 'Crevel sur le divan'. *MéluSine*, No XIII, "Le surréaliste et son psy". Paris: Editions L'Age d'Homme, p. 89-97.

then met him again in the winter of 1933 on the benches of one of the auditoriums at the Sorbonne. He was studying for a psychology certificate while following Georges Dumas' lectures. (...) The first sessions took place Rue de la Pompe in the most classical manner. They continued Boulevard Malesherbes. They lasted an hour, three times a week. Every two or three weeks, Lacan offered a kind of synthesis. He gave long explanations about what had gone on and helped the patient to move ahead. There were already in this first cure, some the characteristics inherent in the style Lacan was to develop in the future.”¹⁰

To return to René Allendy, I shall simply mention in passing the terrible figure of the actor Antonin Artaud, who René Allendy tried without success to treat for opium addiction, and focus instead on the description, at once magic and cruel, which Anaïs Nin gives of her treatment with him. It seems to have been a very peculiar treatment, judging, at least, from what she says about it in her *Journal*; for though the psychoanalytic-styled interpretations are as abundant as they are early, they are drowned in numerous dialogues in which it is difficult to recognise the psychoanalytic reserve so recommended by this same Allendy in his technical writings. The rhythm of just one session a week also restricted the method, and encouraged the development of an idealised transference reaction, as immediate as it was ephemeral, so much did Anaïs Nin's compulsion to repeat oblige her to knock off their pedestal the men whom she had temporarily elevated to the rank of ideal omnipotent Father. During this same period, she even went as far as to have a torrid incestuous relationship with her real father.

It was in April 1932 that she consulted René Allendy:

“Today, for the first time, I rang the bell of Dr. Allendy's house. I was led by a maid through a dark hallway into a dark salon. The dark brown walls, the brown velvet chairs, the dark red rug received me like a quiet tomb, and I shivered. The only light came from a greenhouse on which it opened. It was filled with tropical plants, surrounding a small pool with goldfish in it. A pebble path circled the pool. The sun filtered through the green leaves and gave a subdued greenish light, as if I were at the bottom of the ocean. It seemed apt to leave ordinary daylight behind for the exploration of submerged worlds.

Dr. Allendy's office was soundproofed by a heavy black Chinese curtain, embroidered in gold thread with a few papyrus branches. When the time came, he slid a door

¹⁰ Roudinesco Elisabeth (1993), *Jacques Lacan*, Paris, Fayard.

open and then lifted the curtain and stood there, very tall, his eyes the most alive part of his face, the eyes of a seer. He has very brilliant, even, small teeth, and bold features. He is heavily built, and his bearded face gives him a patriarchic air. It was almost a surprise to see him, a moment later, sitting quietly behind the Morris chair on which I sat, rustling note paper and pencils, and speaking softly. It would have seemed more appropriate for him to be doing horoscopes, or preparing alchemist's formula, or else reading a crystal ball, because he looked more like a magician than a doctor. We talked first of all about his books, his lectures, and my reaction to them."¹¹

Two or three sessions later, on May 4th:

“Dr Allendy’s office. His big desk, and a big shaded lamp. The wall where the window is, the window which looks onto the street, is the one I look at as I sit in the armchair. On the arm of the chair is a small ashtray. Dr. Allendy sits behind this chair, where nothing betrays his presence except the rustle of paper and the sound of his pencil as he makes notes. His questions come from behind the armchair, disembodied, and so I can give all my attention to his words.

Dr. Allendy: ‘It is quite clear from all you tell me that you loved your father devotedly, abnormally, and that you hated the sexual reasons which caused him to abandon you. (...) This may have created in you a certain obscure feeling against sex.’ ”¹²

The interpretation was early and it would not be long before sex came to the surface. Dr. Allendy soon put aside his pen and the notes he was taking during the sessions, contrary to Freud’s prescription, but as one would see most psychoanalysts doing in films. The seduction began in the third or fourth session:

“We discuss finances and I tell Dr. Allendy the cost of the visits will prevent me from seeing him more than once a week. He not only reduces his fee by half but offers to let me pay him by working for him. He has research to do in the library and has some articles which must be re-written. I am very flattered. I have full confidence in my ability as a writer. Dr. Allendy listens to my talk about June.

Anaïs: “June is my ideal of what a woman should be. I am underweight. A few more pounds would add greatly to my self-confidence. I feel like an adolescent girl. Will you add medicine to your psychic treatment? My breasts are too small. ”

Dr. Allendy: “Are they absolutely undeveloped? ”

Anaïs: “No.” As I flounder in my descriptions, I say: “To you, a doctor, the simplest thing is to show them to you. ” And I do. And then Dr. Allendy began to laugh at my fears.

¹¹ Nin, Anaïs. (1966). *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. Edited and with an introduction by G. Stuhlmann, vol I 1931-1934, San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, The Swallow Press and Harcourt, Inc., p. 75.

¹² *Idem*, p. 81.

Dr. Allendy: “Perfectly feminine, small but well-shaped, well-outlined in proportion to the rest of your figure, such a lovely figure, all you need is a few more pounds of it. You are really lovely, so much grace of movement, charm, so much breeding and finesse of line.”

But Anaïs, who was a sharp customer, had noticed what was going on:

“I asked Dr. Allendy to help me as a doctor of medicine. Was this quite a sincere action? Did I have to show him my breasts? Did I want to test my charm on him? Wasn't I pleased that he reacted so admiringly? That he gave me his books afterwards? Is Dr. Allendy really curing me?”¹³

What happened thereafter can easily be imagined. Anaïs played an ambiguous game in which Allendy was put in turns in the position of an all-powerful, perceptive guru, and then of a weak man at her mercy, or of a jealous man exasperated by the accounts of her turbulent love-affairs with Henry Miller, his wife June, Antonin Artaud and others, men or women... In June, three months after the beginning of the treatment, the acting out or *passages à l'acte* began:

“When I arrived and told him I would not be coming again, he put aside the analysis and we talked. I looked at his Moujik nose and wondered if a man like that would be sensual. I was conscious of taking my usual poses. But I felt very panicky. At the end of our talk, he took my hands. I eluded him a little. I put on my hat and cape, but when I was about to leave, he leaned over and said, “*Embrassez-moi*”.

(...) I was very happy after Allendy's kiss. At the same time I know that Henry's most casual kiss can shake the foundations of my body. I realized this keenly today when I saw him after five day's separation. What a convergence of bodies. It is like a furnace when we meet. Yet day by day I realize more completely that only my body is stirred. My best moments with Henry are in bed.”¹⁴

What followed became more and more sordid. Allendy finally decided to make love to her, and then drew her into sado-masochistic scenarios, the ridiculous nature of which she underlined. On April 11, 1933, one year after their first meeting, she wrote:

“DEMON. A DEMON IN ME. Allendy refuses to die. He is roused to fury and to passion by jealousy. He reproaches me for coquetry; he reproaches me for not noticing him at the conference. He saw me going away with Artaud. He saw Henry sitting next to me. He

¹³ *Idem*, p. 90-91.

¹⁴ Nin, Anaïs. (1986). *Henry 'and' June*, from *A Journal of Love. The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1931-1932*. San Diego, New York, London, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, p. 197-198.

reproaches me for playing with him. For ceasing to want him as soon as he became my slave. He begins to bite me, to caress me wildly. He sweeps me off my feet. We lie on the floor. And he is nervous, nervous, frightened. And I am gentle and understanding, and I make him laugh, and I put him at ease. I am so at ease! I'm really laughing. There is no feeling in me. He misunderstands me completely. Every word he says is wrong."¹⁵

Henry Miller, for his part, had begun a psychotherapy with Otto Rank who was living in Paris at the time. It was towards the latter that Anaïs Nin would now turn, soon following him to America where, for a while, she was, becoming of course also her lover, to practise psychotherapy alongside him.

One cannot, of course, reduce the practice of French psychoanalysts during these years to the example of René Allendy alone; but it would seem that even those among them who practised more orthodox psychoanalytic treatments took some liberties with the injunction to abstinence on which Freud had insisted so much. Let us be clear that it was not just a matter of sexual abstinence, though the problem must have arisen often at a period when these men, whose youth we have noted, found they were confronted, in an overheated analytic situation, with the transference love for women who were at the time eager for the sexual emancipation triggered by the aftermath of the First World War. The comfortable, middle-class Parisian milieu, the intellectuals and artists who essentially made up the psychoanalysts' city clientele, imposed more familiar relationships on them than was to be the norm when the popularity of psychoanalysis led other sections of society to lie down on the couch. Moreover, there are no couches in these first accounts, but a kind of chaise-longue, like in the film by Pabst, *Geheimnisse einer Seele...* (*Secrets of a Soul*, 1925). Don't forget this time of feminist revendications, symbolized by the personage of "la garçonne" (the "sassy young woman")

One can also find in the archives a few glimpses of the psychoanalytic activity of René Laforgue. His communications on the "active analysis" favoured in the 1920's by Ferenczi and his

¹⁵ Nin, Anaïs. (1992). Incest, from *A Journal of Love. The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1931-1934*. San Diego, New York, London, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, p. 134-135.

correspondence with Freud on the occasion of the Congress organised in Paris in 1928 on the theme of the psychoanalytic technique give a clear indication of the “liberal” vision he had of the psychoanalytic situation. This is how he wrote to Freud on June 27, 1928 :

“We can certainly make things much easier for the beginner if we make him understand the necessity of being “a free man”, at least in so far as his conception of the case and his attitude to technique are concerned.”

On July 2nd Freud gave this reply :

“I should like to modify your position somewhat with regard to the classical technique. If you wish to give the beginner the feeling of being a free man, of not being obliged to follow the rule slavishly and of being free to abandon himself to his intuition, and of giving free reign to his humanity, you will, I fear, obtain poor results. His intuition will lead him infallibly down the wrong paths and every position is closer to his humanity than the analytic position. (...) It is not a question, then, of introducing liberty into the technique but of continuing to limit it where it still persists today, of replacing even further the indispensable and incommunicable intuition by well-founded instructions. But not everything can be achieved at once and your oppositional line abounds with immediately threatening dangers.”¹⁶

Here I must add that an apparently rather difficult patient, Mr. P., who travelled back and forth between Freud, Ferenczi and Laforgue, playing off their rivalry, made the relationship between the reluctant 34 year-old psychiatrist and the 72 year-old Viennese master, already a delicate matter, even more complicated...

Rudolf Loewenstein, who was younger, 32 years old in 1930, was also to get involved in that difficult cure, even to the point of writing to Freud in April of 1930.

“ Since the end of December, 1929, up until a few days ago, he was in a kind of analytical therapy with me. I’m referring to a kind of analysis because we would talk about social relationships at the same time. I invited him to my home and allowed him to invite me to his. It is impossible to judge if, and just how much, I may have helped him. And yet, he recently made the acquaintance of a young widow whom he would like to marry, without really being able to decide to do it or not. I tried to persuade him to marry her, because I hope that an emotional attachment will do him good. But over the last few days, he has again

¹⁶ Freud, S. (1977h [1923-1933]. "Correspondance Freud-Laforgue, préface d'André Bourguignon", *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse*, 15, Spring 1977, pp. 235-314.

become very unsettled and indecisive, wondering if he should stay in Paris, continue his analysis and his relationship with the widow, or leave. I would be very grateful, honoured Professor, if you could receive Mr. P. and give him your opinion on the subject. I have too little analytical experience, not to mention life experience, to be sure that my advice is justified.”

On April 25th, Loewenstein wrote:

“ I will try to keep him away from you, as you wish me to do. It was because of the fact that I doubted I could possibly support Mr. P. solely through analysis, that I told him to consider analysis to be a secondary means of action and accentuated a solution in his real life; i.e. a professional activity and marriage. To counter his thirst for revenge on Laforgue, of a truly paranoid character (he is conscious of this), and possibility of his doing something on the level of reality, I recently spoke with Laforgue to ask him to invite P. to his home and to speak to him with humanity and kindness. If that conversation goes well, he may eventually agree to an analysis with Laforgue. One more word to characterise Mr. P.: he has excellent memories of Dr. Ferenczi and gets along very well with me on a personal level.”

On the following 27th of May, a new letter:

“My patient, Mr. P., should have written to you requesting you see him again. A few weeks ago, I gave him your answer in these words: that you do not consider analysis to be a sure way of attaining a cure by any means, and that you advise him rather to find a solution in life itself. He was profoundly depressed by the temporary impossibility of seeing you and hoped to be able to see you after your recovery. And I didn't have the heart to tell him that you had no desire to receive him.

“Because of his different unexplainable organic symptoms, I advised him to undergo a complete medical check-up; despite his perpetual criticism, he has great confidence in analysis, and only accepts such a consultation with a physician whose objectivity is guaranteed by psychoanalysts. (...) For the last few days (...) he has fallen into a serious depression. We have agreed on the fact that I can do no more for him. He absolutely does not want to return to Laforgue and an analysis with a woman did not sit well with him. Now, he is demanding a final opinion: should he continue analytical treatment or should he definitively give up analysis? It would be extremely difficult for him to accept the latter solution, and I'm afraid it would cause a rather violent end to the relationship between him and Laforgue. He would of course accept it much easier if you yourself explained it to him. That is the reason I have taken it upon myself yet again to ask you to receive Mr. Provot. I really feel sorry for the poor guy!”

The last document discovered concerning this case of “supervision” ... the 25th of June 1930.

“ Forgive me if I once again go over the case of Mr. P. But he showed me your letter wherein you invite him to go to you for a consultation. That gives me the occasion of adding one more oddity to my report. I wrote in a letter to you that I had told him I couldn't do anything more for him. That was two days before the end of a segment of analysis, a month ago. The next day, he told me that he then understood that he had been in search of a father all his life, and not a mother (...) He is sure his agitation and tendencies toward criticism and to

running from his problems are a defence against his passive homosexuality. But it seems to me that he also wants to test the physician, to see if he still loves him and wants to hold on to him, despite all his “meanness.” And when I told him I couldn’t do anything more for him, he brought me this discovery to tell me that I was wrong to lose hope. Following my advice, he went for a complete medical check-up, which uncovered nothing of importance (...). Since he received your letter, he is clearly happy and satisfied.”¹⁷

Another analytical cure with René Laforgue went no better. From the biography of the famous publisher Bernard Grasset¹⁸, we also know about the turbulent analysis he underwent, starting in 1927 :

“With René Laforgue, he began an analysis in the full sense; that is to say, as any common mortal understands it: he spent an hour or two per day “on the couch”. There, as elsewhere, his imperious character, the Napoleon-of-the-publishing-business side of him, prevailed over any other consideration: Laforgue, like his chauffeur, his secretary, his housekeeper, had to be at his disposal round the clock. ”

After October 1931, the negative transference ended the relationship. On the occasion of a board meeting, at which he seriously lost his temper,

“Laforgue, who had been alerted, arrived at top speed only to receive a torrent of abuse from a furious Grasset who called him a “butcher of the soul”. (...) For several months already, the publisher had been drinking - he enjoyed cocktails. It seems that the sessions with Laforgue, helped by the vapours of alcohol, had kept him upright artificially. (...) He now told Laforgue that he wanted to go and live in Divonne. The doctor agreed, adding that he would visit him regularly, even though he did not agree with all the methods of his colleagues at the spa. (...) Bernard Grasset focused his attention on one theme only: his relations with Dr Laforgue, and, he was very soon persuaded of their harmfulness. (...) From then on, he felt he was living something “monstrous” with Laforgue; that he was being put to the question just as one exorcized in the Middle Ages. In his correspondence, he developed theories on “heavy and pedantic” healing methods “stemming from Germanism”, which had troubled and destroyed, with systematic brutality, his acute sensibility. He refused to visit Laforgue any longer and sought support from another doctor.”

This was to be Dr Angélo Hesnard, the first person in France to have published works and a book on psychoanalysis in 1913 and 1914. As a psychoanalyst he, too, paid little heed to the technical rules which have since prevailed. All his life, he was to remain close to Jacques Lacan, like Lacan, he

¹⁷ Excerpts from this correspondence come from R. Loewenstein’s archives in the Library of Congress, where I photocopied them (and also explained their contents to the librarians there, who had no idea what they said). Written in German, they were translated into French on my request by Mrs. Ruth Menahem.

¹⁸ Bothorel, Jean. (1989). *Bernard Grasset. Vie et passions d'un éditeur*. Paris: B. Grasset.

was to be excluded from the list of training analysts in 1961 because of the modalities of his practice, when their Society requested to be admitted in the International Psychoanalytical Association.

When he was solicited to replace René Laforgue, he wrote to his new patient:

“I’m trying to understand exactly your state of mind. I think it may be characterised by saying that the whole world seems to you to be under the “sign of the fault.” Everything is “guilty” or rather pretext for guilt. Friends, those dear to you, your doctor are all your judges (or else they can’t understand you). You are before a sort of court and the only relief you find in this nightmare is make yourself, from time to time, the judge of others. This horrible farce is fed by the regrettably universal sources of psychoanalytical “prudishness.”

“What a wonderful pretext his imaginary feelings of guilt find in this science that is so difficult to understand! I beg you, stop waving flashy flags, stop the bombast, raving about “Oedipus.” You, subtle and wonderfully intuitive Latin man, don’t let yourself be led astray by the ghosts of Judeo-German sorcery. It’s only if you don’t take them seriously that you will attain the true and comforting analysis you’ve been calling for with all you being.”¹⁹

But it was not only these difficult therapies that created a necessity to modify a technique regarded as being too rigorous. René Laforgue did not fail to rock the “setting”, both in his private practice and in his conduct of didactic analyses which would train Françoise Marette - and future Françoise Dolto - or Juliette Favez-Boutonnier, among others. After becoming important psychoanalysts, some of them still had memories of the time when they used to spend a part of their holidays together near the “Chabert” estate, the holiday home which Laforgue, nicknamed “*le petit Père*”, and his wife owned in the South of France. They had called their little group the *Club des piqués* (“The Nutters’ Club”), living a joyful life following one another from the swimming pool in the garden to the couch. The transferences and counter-transferences that developed were to create bonds strong enough to survive the black years which saw Laforgue banned from the Paris Psychoanalytic Society on account of his pro-German leanings during the Second World War.

¹⁹ Bothorel Jean (1989), *op. cit.*, p. 256.

A letter from Françoise Dolto to her father, dated September 25, 1935, gives an amusing description of this:

“Lunch yesterday with the Laforgues; at the moment, the Dr’s mother and his wife’s mother, as well as two friends, are at the Chabert estate. I picked grapes all afternoon and oh, I forgot to mention the bathe in their swimming pool in front of the house before lunch. Their property is typically Provencale: a yellow house with pergolas, a rock garden, and cypress trees which protect it from the mistral. (...) I had supper with them again, and, after speaking with Laforgue, I decided to take advantage of this vacation where I am as free as the air (...) to stay a week or so and to have a session of psychoanalysis each day in order to get things straight in my mind concerning the work – which in my opinion, as well as in his, I think, has been considerable – that this summer in Paris and this trip alone have helped me to accomplish.”

One should point out that her brother, Philippe Marette, was also in analysis with Laforgue during the same period.

She returned there one year later and wrote to her father again on August 16, 1936 :

“I am very glad to have come here. Excellent work with Laforgue. What a leap forward I have made compared with last year, during my last stay here. At the same time, I now have a completely different attitude towards analysis. Last year, and even just a few months ago, I felt rather inferior and dependent in this situation. Now, I am working with Laforgue as an equal. It is a work of collaboration. (...) But now – and Laforgue agrees – it is pointless having numerous sessions one after the other. The best solution is to live and from time to time to do a few sessions to clarify things.”

The copy of a song was enclosed with this letter:

“Refrain

It’s we who are the nutters,
the obsessionals, the neurotics
we all come to see René
from the four corners of mania
we are welcomed with open arms at Chaberts! ” etc.

What are we think of these psychoanalytic customs which must seem very strange to us today? I think one would be wrong to condemn them too strongly, even if there can be no doubt that many patients paid for such an absence of the necessary limits between the armchair and the couch

with their own alienation. But one should remember that at this time the spirit and manner in which these patients went to the analyst did not correspond to the norm that was subsequently made necessary by the world-wide development of psychoanalysis.

Such a norm had still not really been established during these years between the two World Wars. A certain dose of courage, of madness, and, at any rate, of nonconformism, was necessary to embark on a psychoanalytic adventure that was being violently criticised at the same time to an extent that we can no longer appreciate today. “Asphyxiating gas”, “Theories of the Boche scientist”, “If you see a psychoanalyst coming, take a cudgel...”, are all examples of the sweet words one came across in the French newspapers of the time in which accusations of sexual obsession and pornography appeared regularly. One really had to be a bit “off one's head” to undertake a cure, and even more so, to have the aim of one day becoming a psychoanalyst oneself!

The “psychoanalytic process” is born and develops in conditions which, even today, remain very mysterious. While it is important not to suffocate it by acting out or serious breaches of the rule of abstinence, one can also see it flourishing under conditions that are no more orthodox than those that existed in the period I have just skated over too quickly. Sometimes, in the sterilized conditions of treatments codified by the most stringent institutional orthodoxy, it never manifests itself.

Some, without becoming psychoanalysts in their turn, seem to have heard the song of the double meaning and to have understood the path they needed to follow in order to start a treatment. I am thinking here less of Georges Bataille, who is said to have been in analysis in 1926-1927 with Dr Adrien Borel, who was not very orthodox either and more of a psychiatrist than a psychoanalyst, than of Raymond Queneau who retraced this journey in search of his own story in his poem “*Chêne et chien*” (*Oak and Dog*), published in 1937. He did an analysis which lasted a few years and finished with his analyst's departure for Israel on account of the war of 1939.

I like to cite the beginning of this poem, for it shows a deep understanding of what is at stake in any treatment, and it is with these lines that I shall conclude this journey across a lively period which, in spite of external oppositions, internal disputes and threat of scission in the psychoanalytic Society of Paris, the unic one at the time, was able to transmit the little psychoanalytic flame from which we continue to benefit today:

“I lay down on a couch
and began to tell the story of my life,
or what I understood to be my life.
What did I know of my life?”

Is there a better question one can ask oneself when undertaking a psychoanalytic treatment, whether in the days of Surrealism or nowadays?

Thank you for giving me your attention.