



**INSITUTE OF SOCIAL SCENCES AND HUMANITIES
SKOPJE**

MASTER THESIS

CANDIDATE

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June 2024

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Penis Envy and Castration Complex: The Resiliency of the Constructs

Key words: Freud, penis, phallus, castration, female, sexual development, penis envy, castration complex, sexuality, Oedipus complex, mother, father, femininity

Introduction

They feel seriously wronged, often declare that they want to ‘have something like it too’, and fall a victim to ‘envy for the penis’, which will leave ineradicable traces on their development and the formation of their character and which will not be surmounted in even the most favorable cases without a severe expenditure of psychical energy...The discovery that she is castrated is a turning point in a girl’s growth¹

Even today, almost a century after the announcement of these words, researchers and writers still feel rather strongly about the concepts of castration and penis envy in women, strong enough to keep the debate alive. Under these circumstances an inevitable question comes to mind as to why this examination is still present and thus necessitates further investigations related to the topic. “Freud has been criticized for his failure to understand and write about femininity...although from the outset he worked with highly intelligent, articulate women analysands...”² Despite being puzzled with the issue of femininity and female sexuality, since women themselves “...are the problem.”³, Freud has articulated and rearticulated his thoughts on the matter throughout his 50-years long career often enough. Thus, according to James Strachey (the general editor of the Complete Works of Freud) Freud shaped his understanding and subsequent theory on sexual development throughout two main periods. The first one is up to the case of Dora (1900) after which Freud seemingly loses interest in feminine psychology and the second one starting off in 1915 with Freud’s case studies of women⁴ and attempts at unveiling this ancient puzzle that

“...people have knocked their head against...”⁵ During the first period, Freud addresses sexual development of women and men as equivalent, but the second period marks his dissatisfaction with this understanding that he explains in the following manner “...the theories developed...concerning the end of the Oedipus complex...gave the key to the new thesis.”⁶ In this newfound ‘comprehension’ and having to explain the girl’s primary attachment to her mother, Freud no longer believes that the sexual development of women and men is identical since unlike the little boy, the little girl has two tasks before her, “...a change in her leading sexual organ and a change in her sexual object...”⁷ The change of the sexual organ is from clitoris to vagina, and the change of the sexual object is from mother to father. His path to this newfound understanding is marked with changes that seem to serve one purpose only, fitting in castration complex and penis envy as groundworks of the theory.

Castration complex and penis envy, concepts that are hypothesized very early in Freud’s work, are now established as the central concepts in the Oedipus complex that in return cannot be discussed separately from the overall sexual development in women. Even more so, “...however many issues there are that arise in the course of the discussions of female sexuality, what remains fundamentally at stake in the debate, when all is said and done, is the issue of castration.”⁸ In addition, “...Freud never relinquishes his belief in the importance of penis envy for female sexuality...”⁹ despite it possibly being the most controversial concept he envisions.

Freud’s two key texts that at its heart deal with the castration complex in girls are ‘Female Sexuality’ and ‘Femininity’ that spark a heated debate among the psychoanalytic circle which later continues in the works of Lacan, Mitchell, Irigaray and others. Even today, when the debate on female sexuality seems unresolved and possibly abandoned, it still provides a fertile ground for discussion. In that respect, despite being fiercely criticized, Freud has “...provided the volatile grounds, the sites of contention, for feminist re-articulation.”¹⁰ It is unavoidable however to question the longevity of his theories of psychosexual development, specifically female psychosexual development, that are

accepted in much of their original formulation even today. A possible explanation would be the still existent and solid psychoanalytic movement whose practitioners rely heavily on Freud's theories in an almost unchanged format. In addition, "Current psychoanalytic literature reveals little direct questioning of his formulations..."¹¹ Another point of view worth examining is the possible recommendation these concepts carry because they were debated by striking personalities, which on top of that were/are all psychoanalysts. That is possibly the reason as to why debates over concepts that do not seem imbedded in practice or science still endure, because remarkable people believe in them and hence promote them.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the concepts of penis envy and castration complex regarding female sexuality. The focus is an attempt to grasp the longevity of these concepts despite their offensiveness, phallocentrism, and even the inability for their systematic and scientific exploration. Feminists, with many of them having some background in psychoanalysis fell under the spell of supporting or disproving the concepts. Therefore, it is essential to address both the durability of penis envy and castration complex in women keeping in mind that they have also contributed to the growth of feminist thought. To this end, Freud's theory of psychosexual development and his thoughts on the concepts is reviewed first. The analysis of his discourse related to penis envy and castration complex is done both chronologically and conceptually. In that setting it is interesting to evidence his theoretical reshaping, but even more so, to mark his early established postulates of castration complex and penis envy and the theoretical reorganization he undertakes to fit them in.

Since both penis envy and castration complex in women spike a heated debate in the psychoanalytic society, in continuation a review of neo-Freudians writings on the matter, including both supporters and detractors is included. Consequently, papers of Van Ophuijsen, Starcke, Abraham, Deutsch, Horney, Muller-Braunschweig, Jones, Klein, and de Groot are reviewed. These names represent the most important voices in the psychoanalytic circle, symbolic to the great rift the ideas of penis envy and castration complex caused among Freud's followers. Even more so, this theses seeks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the causes of the disagreement and with that an enhanced

comprehension of the uses and meanings of penis envy and castration complex for the psychoanalysis as a whole.

After, the concepts are seemingly forgotten but Jacques Lacan, considered one of the great thinkers of the 20th century, revives and reformulates the concepts in his lectures attended by many of the later prominent feminist philosophers. Central to his theory of sexuality is the phallus, replacing the notion of penis (envy), that is not a biological organ but a symbolic representation of the penis and the meaning it has for both males and females. The concept of phallus which replaces that of penis and gains a far more prominent role in the overall system of Lacan's version of psychoanalysis, which he claims to be Orthodox Freudianism in spite of the overall conceptual and terminological overhaul. Phallus is a constitutive element in the imaginary triangle comprised of the mother, child, and father. Castration happens for all since the phallus is recognized by the child as the mother's desire (in the pre-Oedipal phase) and the child therefore wants to identify with it and become it. In the Oedipal phase, the symbolic father intervenes in this imaginary triangle and castrates the child. Thus, the child is faced with accepting or rejecting the castration. In this context, penis envy is imbedded in the castration complex and frequently met in women. Lacan does equalize males and females in the sense of the latter, and like Freud he restates his own theories. However, by rearticulating Freud he gives him further credibility and establishes his theory and with that castration complex and penis envy even deeper. There is little doubt from this historical perspective that Lacan's theories are phallocentric, and male centric despite the numerous defenses of the concepts by feminists that this is a genderless concept, or a symbol that can be appropriated by both genders and sexes.

Juliet Mitchell, a trained psychoanalyst, reinterprets both Freud and Lacan, being their defender and emphasizing a misreading by anyone who criticizes their work. She considers both Freud and Lacan to give a crucial meaning to castration complex, the former in the context of separation from subjecthood and the latter in the context of constituting the symbolic. Furthermore, Mitchell reasons that Freud's understanding of femininity initiates aspects for feminist rearticulation of the persistent gender conservatism, while Lacan offers optimism in terms of gender positions shift since both females and males must take up a

different stance when constructing their sexual distinctiveness. Consequently, Mitchell believes that the Oedipus and the castration complexes are crucial developmental relationships for understanding gender and thus femininity. The castration complex, specifically the prohibition of engaging into sexual intercourse with one's mother and conceiving a child with her is the key differentiator in taking up a feminine or masculine position. Finally, according to Mitchell we cannot deny the existence of the Oedipus complex simply because it leads to recognizing femininity as powerlessness. Her recognition of male dominance and the primacy of the phallus in Freud's work as well as the phallic centricity in Lacan's representation of the outer world is expressive of the patriarchal reality.

Being Lacan's student and a trained psychoanalyst but at the same time a prolific critic of both Freud and her former teacher, Luce Irigaray is the thinker that is analyzed last. Her main criticism of Freud refers to addressing boys' and girls' development in the same manner, matching them and the changes they undergo. The moment when their biological differences become visible and apparent, women become mirrors for men and their egos and their role is viewed exclusively through motherhood. Lacan is challenged for paternalizing the cultural birth of humans, demoting maternity to muteness, and promoting paternity to establishing civilization. Language is masculine therefore for femininity only the hysterical discourse is its exclusive place.

Finally, current literature and research on both penis envy and castration complex will be reviewed and addressed, investigating contemporary academic discussion, if it exists. Keeping in mind the scarce and even inconclusive evidence one cannot but wonder if both penis envy and castration complex were worth the attention unless emphasized by strong, authoritative figures like Lacan and Freud. In that sense, both thinkers gathered a large body of followers that later reviewed and accordingly criticized and/or emphasized their ideas and hence kept them alive. In conclusion, the paper attempts to review the validity of castration complex and penis envy in women from a theoretical perspective. It will offer another critical interpretation on the theory of women's psychosexual development, specifically penis envy and castration complex, reviewing the ideas of the most influential

thinkers in the field such as Freud, the Neo-Freudians, Lacan, Mitchell and Irigaray and evidencing their current presence in scientific publications.

This thesis aims at answering the following main research question: What attributes to the longevity and resiliency of penis envy and castration complex in women, concepts conceived by Freud and subsequently debated over the entire twentieth century? In addition, other questions will be examined, such as: What did Freud try to explain through the introduction of the concepts of penis envy and castration complex in women; How have these two concepts directed the psychological thought in the 20th century; How did these two concepts provoke a rift in the Psychoanalytic society; What was the role of specific neo-Freudians in the debate around the concepts; What was the role of Lacan in reviving these concepts; How did the feminist critical voices contribute to preservation or dissolution of the concepts?

Theoretical Background

“Freud’s Oedipal theory is widely perceived as the skeleton of the psychoanalytic model.”¹² Hence the discussion on *penis envy* and *castration complex* is inseparable from the overall sexual development. In addition, the following pages will display Freud’s writing on the matter both by theme and chronologically for a better grasp on the manner he reached his conclusions, proposing various changes to fit his *interpretations* more consistently and logically.

Freud gives a rudimentary description on his later elaborated views as early as 1897, in a letter to his closest friend at the time Fliess, writing “...the zones which no longer produce a release of sexuality in normal and mature human beings must be the regions of the anus and of the mouth and throat.”¹³ This is a clear indication of his latter idea of various erogenous zones. In addition, he also writes of consecutive developmental periods, and even more so with a “...different chronological arrangement in the male and female sexes.”¹⁴ However, Freud assumes that the greatest difference between the two sexes appears in puberty, “...when girls are seized upon by a non-neurotic sexual repugnance and males by libido.”¹⁵ In other words, girls develop a natural disgust for sex while boys develop a natural taste for it. He also writes of the clitoris as the point of sexual sensitivity in childhood and the later shift from clitoris to vagina, that needs to happen in puberty.¹⁶ In this context it is important to remember that during this early period Freud employs hypnosis only, since free associations and psychoanalysis as the methods of work that led him to these breakthroughs are yet to be discovered. Hence, his later claims that these discoveries were made possible with the help of psychoanalysis would be a complete fiction. To this end, Freud much later, in one of his last works, writes:

Few of the findings of psycho-analysis have met with such universal contradiction or have aroused such an outburst of indignation as the assertion that the sexual function starts at the beginning of life and reveals its presence by important signs even in childhood. And yet, not other finding of analysis can be demonstrated so easily and so completely.¹⁷

Thus, even though he postulates sexuality as fundamental for human development as early as the 1890s, only in 1925, he ‘remembers’ that the methods of psychoanalysis brought about this discovery. Even though Freud mentions psychical analysis as early as 1896, according to the editor of his works James Strachey, it is in the context of his at-the-time used method, which is hypnosis.¹⁸ However, the first mention of psychoanalysis as the technique Freud postulated and employed in unveiling the human psyche is first mentioned in the *Interpretation of Dreams* covering a period between 1900 and 1901.¹⁹

Freud presents his first theory of sexual development in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* from 1905, more precisely in the second and third essays, named *Infantile Sexuality* and *The Transformations of Puberty*, accordingly. He begins by proposing that the first question troubling the sexual instinct is the question of the origin of babies and he proposes or rather restates the three-part division of sexual organization into oral, sadistic-anal, and genital zones primacy. Consequently, the sexual instinct or the so-called libido is developed throughout these three components and their unification. Specifically, during the oral component libido is satisfied through nourishment, and the breast is its object-choice until it is diverted towards and incorporated in the child’s own body. During the genital zone’s primacy, the libido is satisfied through auto-eroticism that is later diverted towards an external object choice. This external object, or rather its first choice marks the onset of the Oedipus complex²⁰ which is mentioned as early as 1897, in Freud’s letters to Fliess, however it is fully incorporated into his theory of sexuality later. This marks Freud’s *scientific* onset into the investigation of human sexuality and its consequences for the human psyche. He declares an identical psychosexual development between the sexes, which drives him to organize his theory around this equality. Once again, we evidence that he first envisions the concepts that he later claims to have evidenced in therapy. To this end, his later changes produce even bigger distrust towards his claims that he represents as discoveries made in his psychoanalytic practice.

Going back to the *Three Essays...*, specifically the first theories that children form about the existence of two sexes, according to Freud does not pose a riddle for the child because “It is self-evident to a male child that a genital like his own is to be attributed to everyone

he knows...”²¹ Thus, the first sexual theory that children create is equalizing boys and girls through a phallocentric view, when the little boy attributes a penis to everyone “...including females, the possession of a penis...”²². This is admittedly confusing as it obviously stated that not all children, but boys only attribute a penis to everyone. That is why a footnote is added fifteen years later by Freud remedying this mistake in the following manner “Both male and female children form a theory that women no less than men originally had a penis, but that they have lost it by castration.”²³ In this respect, when it comes to girls, specifically girls seeing the male genital being different than their own, they immediately are overwhelmed by ‘penis envy’ and wanting to be boys.²⁴ However, this is not evident at the point of creating this text but has to be added much later. Hence, children are wondering about babies, but they do not wonder about the sexual differences between the sexes as both girls and boys think that everyone has a penis. Early on the penis is given such an important role that all subsequent additions and changes must take this into consideration. This is yet another point of uncertainty added to Freud’s claims of a *discovering* made in his practice.

The girl’s belief that her penis is there but it is small and will grow will be named “... primacy of the *phallus*”²⁵ in 1923. Freud claims that this is the first impression a girl creates due to an absence of a penis. However, she slowly realizes that the penis was there before and is now missing/gone and will never grow. Through observation of their brothers, girls

...develop a great interest in that part of the boy’s body. But this interest promptly falls under the sway of envy. They feel themselves unfairly treated. They make attempts to micturate in the posture that is made possible for boys by their possessing a big penis; and when a girl declares that ‘she would rather be a boy’, we know what deficiency her wish is intended to put right.²⁶

In other words, after observing their brothers’ *big* penises, girls develop jealousy because they cannot empty their bladders as easily as boys. Freud keeps insisting that women perceive themselves as damaged and that this conclusion is acquired from psychoanalytic work, yet he fails to provide any evidence to validate these claims. In

addition, these claimed observations make him reach opposing conclusions sometimes within only a few pages of a single text. Thus, he states “In consequence of unfavorable circumstances, both of an external and an internal nature, the following observations apply chiefly to the sexual development of one sex only – that is, of males.”²⁷ However, only several pages later, while addressing penis envy, he states “...It is easy to observe that little girls fully share their brother’s opinion of it...”²⁸ It seems Freud cannot make up his mind if the ‘observations’ he claims to have conducted relate to boys only or to girls too. Accordingly, it is difficult for the reader to reach the same conclusions that he supposedly tested through analyses and observations. Even more so, had he been truly observing girls he would have offered a more tangible proof of his statements, and he would not have so shifted so easily between two juxtaposed claims; that girls are envious because they do not have a penis, and at the same time, or rather within the same text, his inability to determine this in girls. Nevertheless, his predicament concerning the sexual development of boys and girls, that he previously claimed to be identical, is now apparent and will continue to exist, unresolved until his end.

Freud assumes the existence of Oedipus complex from his own dream or “I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood...”²⁹ Later, in 1900, he ascertains it as frequently encountered in dreams³⁰, and finally establishes it in 1916, suggesting that from the third year onwards, the primacy of the genitals is formed, hence the phenomenon of sensual object-choice finally presents itself. The mechanism is as follows; autoeroticism of each of the previous sexual stages is first substituted with an outside object and is afterwards replaced with a single object. Hence, it is his belief at this time that the “...child’s sexual life shows much agreement with an adult’s.”³¹ However, in a later work, which is often the case in his writings, he states exactly the opposite “Sexuality in children showed a different picture in many respects from that in adults...”³². In other words, once the primacy of the genitals is established, a love-object is chosen, and this is the mother that in turn onsets the Oedipus complex. As in this period Freud still believes in an identical development in both sexes, he states:

Things happen in just the same way with little girls, with the necessary changes: an affectionate attachment to her father, a need to get rid of her mother as superfluous and to take her place, a coquetry which already employs the methods of later womanhood – these offer a charming picture, especially in small girls, which makes us forget the possibly grave consequences lying behind this infantile situation.³³

Thus, the mother is not able to stimulate an adequate developmental outcome in her daughter, so the girl stands no chance of ever attaining ‘appropriate’ development, only the boy does. In other words, women, like objects, are beyond repair and the developmental outcome that is available to boys, will not be, or rather cannot be achieved in girls. Aligning the psychosexual development between the sexes and expecting that *things are the same in girls*, Freud falls into yet another trap, that of the primary attachment to the mother, that will in prospect require him to further modify his theory.

During further development and after the latency period, all human beings must devote themselves to the grandiose task of parental detachment as a means of becoming a social community member. If this somehow fails, neurosis is inevitable and thus “...the Oedipus complex may justly be regarded as the nucleus of the neurosis.”³⁴ Once again Freud finds the proof for these claims in unreported observations of children and unaccounted examples from psycho-analytic practice. For illustration, he states that developmental stages prior to the third year can only be identified with the help of psycho-analysis “These are nothing but constructions, to be sure, but, if you carry out psycho-analysis in practice, you will find that they are necessary and useful constructions.”³⁵ This necessitates a reminder of him hinting at these developmental periods at the very beginning of his writings, in his letters to Fliess, when psychoanalysis is yet to be discovered. In addition, he himself states that these developmental periods and necessary constructions. Even more so, when emphasizing the procurement of evidence through psycho-analysis he deems important to state “...consideration of clearly retained memories from childhood uninfluenced by analysis.”³⁶ It seems that Freud entangles himself in a philosophical fallacy as psychoanalysis provides evidence through useful constructs, yet childhood memories must be uninfluenced by psychoanalysis, meaning that they are. Therefore, an

inevitable doubt comes to mind as to whether psychoanalysis influences memories, and furthermore if Freud is aware of this and cautions as against.

Since Freud originally believes that the Oedipus complex happens identically in both sexes, he states that after having to forgo the father as an object-choice, girls would often identify with him, thus the outcome of the Oedipus complex will be determined by the strength of the masculine/feminine disposition in the child. In other words, if the girl's disposition is feminine, whatever that means, this will determine a somewhat positive outcome of her Oedipus complex. Of course, despite his claims that this has been shown in analysis, no actual cases are presented or pointed to.³⁷ In addition to this, one might wonder what a feminine disposition means, and even more so, the ways in which this disposition is acquired. Freud, of course, does not address these issues but more importantly, he now faces an even more important problem as its majesty the penis seems to have lost its importance as the little girl's resolution of the Oedipus complex rests solely on her feminine disposition. Thus in 1924 Freud fully incorporates the phallic organization in girls' development by ascribing a penis-like qualities to the clitoris, that nevertheless has a lesser value.

The little girl's clitoris behaves just like a penis to begin with; but when she makes a comparison with a playfellow of the other sex, she perceives that she has 'come off badly' and she feels this a wrong done to her, and as a ground for inferiority...The essential difference thus comes about that the girl accepts castration as an accomplished fact, whereas the boy fears the possibility of its occurrence.³⁸

As a result, and 'luckily' for girls, their "...Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of the small bearer of the penis; in my experience, it seldom goes beyond the taking of her mother's place and the adopting of a feminine attitude towards her father."³⁹ Thus, the girl compensates the loss of a penis with the wish for a baby and "Her Oedipus complex culminates in a desire, which is long retained, to receive a baby from her father as a gift – to bear him a child."⁴⁰ Yet again a new problem arises as the dissolution of the Oedipus

complex seems impossible in girls and Freud's 'experience' proves faulty, as further adjustment of his theory is needed. The 'solution' he finds asserts that "One has an impression that the Oedipus complex is then gradually given up because this wish is never fulfilled."⁴¹ Thus, the girl now has two wishes, for a penis and for a baby, but the supposedly lesser strength of her sadistic component arising due to the "...stunted growth of her penis..."⁴², makes the transformation of sexual into inhibited aims easier. However, he adds words of caution as his knowledge of the "...developmental processes in girls is unsatisfactory, incomplete, and vague."⁴³, even though most of his patients were female and despite his claims that he centers his theory around his practice.

At this point however, Freud faces another issue as the equal psychosexual development in both sexes cannot explain how the little girl forgoes the primary attachment to her mother and becomes attached to her father. Despite his belief that the Oedipus complex in girls is quite straightforward compared to boys, this will not turn up to be true. Therefore, in his 'Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' from 1925, Freud proposes his final view on the sexual development of girls and the importance of the castration complex and penis envy in their development. He starts off from the obviously incongruous notion, the fact that if the mother is the first object-choice in both girls and boys, then it is obvious that developmentally speaking, something is amiss as girls need to abandon the mother and acquire the father as object. This poses a complex issue for the girls as they need to forgo their primary object-choice, but in addition they also need to change their primary erogenous zone, from clitoris to vagina. Freud proposes that in the phallic phase a link is established between masturbation and the object (mother/father). However, at this time girls discover their lack of penis (castration complex) and thus develop a penis envy which can psychically develop in several ways:

1. A sense of inferiority and thus contempt for their own sex.
2. Jealousy as a personality trait.
3. Untying/loosening the relationship with the mother as a love-object.
4. Further removal of (opposition to) masturbation from her own sexuality.⁴⁴

Hence, Freud states

...while the child is at the highest point of its infantile sexual development, a genital organization of a sort is established; but only the male genitals play a part in it. And the female ones remain undiscovered. Now the contrast between the sexes is not stated in terms of 'male' or 'female' but of 'possessing a penis' or 'castrated'. The *castration complex* which arises in this connection is of the profoundest importance in the formation alike of character and of neuroses.⁴⁵

Therefore, the discovered lack of penis leads to the creation of jealousy and inferiority and is the onset for neuroses for women. Since now everything revolves around 'possessing a penis or not' missing such an important part of their body, gives birth to a desire in the little girl for being a boy and there is no breakout from this. The superiority of this single body part, the almighty penis, in the overall sexual development of humans is cemented at last. Like the boy, the girl too establishes a primary attachment to her mother, but once discovering how her mother had wronged her, the girl needs to discard her altogether. Only after succeeding with this, she can truly begin her attachment to her father, or enter the Oedipus complex. Consequently, a further attempt for logical alignment is needed and Freud now needs to introduce yet another phase in the psychosexual development of girls, the pre-Oedipal complex. Specifically, in the Oedipal complex the child attaches to the parent of the opposite sex while at the same time assumes a hostile position towards the same sex parent. In his own words "In the case of a boy there is no difficulty in explaining this."⁴⁶ Since the boy's first love object was the mother it comes as no surprise that this love only deepens while a hostility starts to arise towards the father. However, Freud wonders how the girl, whose first love object is also the mother, changes the object of love by choosing the father and consequently turning away from her mother in hostility. Thus, he generates the pre-Oedipal phase in girls or "...the phase of exclusive attachment to the mother,"⁴⁷ and he now states that girls, unlike boys, have two specific, developmental tasks, surrendering her leading genital zone, the clitoris to the vagina, and undergoing an exchange of the original object choice, her mother for her father.⁴⁸ The Oedipus complex now seems more complex for girls and more straightforward for boys. Hence, now "...the

main genital occurrence of childhood must take place in relation to the clitoris.”⁴⁹ and in women, therefore,

Their sexual life is regularly divided into two phases, of which the first has a masculine character, while only the second is specifically feminine...Parallel with this first great difference there is the other, concerned with the finding of the object...A female’s first object, too, must be the mother: the primary conditions for a choice of object are, of course, the same for all children...But at the end of her development...to the change in her own sex there must correspond a change in the sex of her object.⁵⁰

Freud assumes that the “...*pre-Oedipus* phase,”⁵¹ has a greater importance for females than males and having placed such an importance to the object shift from mother to father, in continuation the main issue is how such a shift happens. Freud finds “...not a single factor, but a whole number of them operating together...”⁵²

- ~ Jealousy of other people (rivals).
- ~ The effect of the castration complex (“...on the creature who is without a penis...the little girl makes the discovery of her organic inferiority...”⁵³).
- ~ Prohibition of masturbation (even though she aroused this activity at first).
- ~ Not being given enough milk (sucking).
- ~ Unfulfilled love expectations.⁵⁴

Thus, the mother is blamed for all these issues, and only in girls even though four out of the five mentioned issues can also be attributions created by boys regarding their mothers. Further on, it seems that now the sole absence of the penis is not the only thing that matters, however Freud finds a solution to fit his earlier claim by stating that the essence of the problem is probably, that “...she failed to provide the little girl with the only proper genital.”⁵⁵ Despite the little girl’s anger and frustration, “She acknowledges the fact of her castration. And with it too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority; but

she rebels against the unwelcome state of affairs.”⁵⁶ From this point on, according to Freud, three lines for psychosexual development for women become possible:

1. General revolt/disgust with sexuality.
2. Adhering to threatened masculinity (developing a masculinity complex).
3. ‘Normal female attitude’ being reached by appropriating the father as the object and thus finding the way to the feminine Oedipus complex.⁵⁷

Thus, the girl gives up her wish for a penis and substitutes it with a wish for a baby and this finally helps her shift towards the father as love-object possible and logical. In conclusion, the Oedipus complex in girls is a secondary construct, the primary being the castration complex that prepares the girl for the Oedipus complex.⁵⁸ Furthermore, in a footnote added in 1935 in his Autobiographical Study he states

The first sexual object of a baby girl (just as of a baby boy) is her mother; and before a woman can reach the end of her normal development she has to change not only her sexual object but also her leading genital zone. From this circumstance difficulties arise and possibilities of inhibition which are not present in the case of men.⁵⁹

This now poses another problem, the issue of resolving the Oedipus complex. While in boys this resolution happens as soon as fear of castration sets in, in girls’ castration certainty helps her resolve the pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother. However, there is no event to help the Oedipus resolution and consequently there is no need for this. Hence, the question remains as to how and whether the girl resolves her Oedipus complex and how does she acquire adult sexuality.

Chronologically, Freud announces sexual developmental periods as early as 1897 when he still works with hypnosis. From 1900 to 1920 he claims that the psychosexual development in both boys and girls is identical but, in his need, to fit the importance of the penis in 1923 he proclaims the primacy of the phallus. Hence, both sexes have the mother

as their primary object and phallic or masculine sexuality but there is an asymmetry since Oedipus complex and castration complex function differently. While in boys, castration complex marks the end of the Oedipus complex, in girls the castration complex inaugurates the Oedipus complex, so they transfer their love from the mother to the father or penis owner. Therefore, penis is equalized with the father first and with a wish for a baby later. This however still does not explain the detachment of the little girl from her mother so in 1925 Freud declares that psychosexual development is different for both sexes, introduces the pre-Oedipus complex for girls and announces the importance of penis envy in that detachment. This still, however, does not account for the resolution of the Oedipus complex and attainment of feminine sexuality in girls.

Hence, Freud worked on creating a logical theory of sexual development for women throughout his career. Even more so, it seems he tried to fit his early imaginations regarding sexual development into a coherent theory that has been shaped and re-shaped to fit these thoughts. There is an obvious lack of proof and there is a fair share of explanatory shifts, but these are possibly not the most problematic issues. The fact that he introduces both penis envy and castration complex early in his theory however and then spends most of his professional life tip toing around these concepts and trying to fit everything into their existence is highly challenging. Even the Oedipus complex seems like a mandatory later creation to organize the distinctiveness of the penis around it. Hence, he started off by equalizing the development between the sexes and attributing the question of where babies come from to both boys and girls and modified it to penis envy. He also shifted from Oedipus complex and introduced the pre-Oedipal phase. In addition, Freud wrote of a straightforward Oedipus complex in girls, and ended devising a complex understanding of the female psychosexual development that still has its fair share of unanswered issues. No wonder, women represented a *dark continent* for him.

One cannot help but wonder if the "opportunistic Freud"⁶⁰, the one with a self-proclaimed habit of napping while his patients were under hypnosis⁶¹, the doctor who was indifferent to his patients' sufferings "...she is beyond any possibility of therapy, but it is still her duty to sacrifice herself to science."⁶² and frequently changing narratives "...

should at least make us wonder whether his powers of observation and analysis ever functioned with sufficient independence from his wishes.”⁶³ As Freud himself states “...I must endeavor to construct a narrative in which subjective and objective attitudes, biographical and historical interests, are combined...”⁶⁴

The Neo-Freudian Debate

The selected papers, chosen for the purpose of following up on the debate on penis envy and castration complex in the context of female sexuality, were all originally published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis covering a period from 1917 to 1935. They outline the arising debate between Freud and his follower and are vital for understanding the developing thoughts on female sexuality. For the purposes of providing an easier understanding follow up of the debate, Neo-Freudians' writings along with Freud's two key texts that spark the debate *The Infantile Genital Organization* from 1923 and *The Dissolution of the Oedipus complex* produced a year later⁶⁵ will be presented in a chronological order.

Johan H. W. Van Ophuijsen presents his *Contribution to the Masculinity Complex in Women* in 1917 (published in 1924 in the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis 5) affirming that castration complex in women is based on a belief in the prospect of having male genitalia. In this context however, he draws a difference between the castration and masculinity complexes, attaching a sense of guilt only to the former one, "...a consciousness of guilt belongs to the castration complex. The loss, the damage, or the faulty development of the genital organ is supposed to be the result of wrong-doing, often punishment for a sexual lack."⁶⁶ In the masculinity complex, the feeling of being wronged predominates and this is expressed through rivalry with men, and not an identification with them, specifically "...rivalry with men in the intellectual and artistic spheres."⁶⁷ More important however, is how this "...phantasy of masculinity is nourished..."⁶⁸ and through the presented cases he hints that this is linked to the formed attachment to the mother or "...infantile intimacy with the mother."⁶⁹ Therefore, Ophuijsen suggests two very important ideas, that masculinity complex is expressed through competitiveness with men in the professional/social sphere, and that masculinity complex originates from the primary attachment to the mother. Later, other Neo-Freudians develop these ideas further, with a particular focus on the mother – daughter relationship. Freud does acknowledge the invention of the masculinity complex to Ophuijsen but does not credit his focused attention to the importance of the early attachment with the mother. Even more so, Freud announces

the emergence of the castration complex, a stance he will keep until the end, in the phallic phase, while Ophuijsen postulates its emergence in the oral phase of psychosexual development when attachment with the mother is formed, a point that Abraham will further develop.

August Starcke's paper, presented in 1920 and published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis in 1921, focuses on the universality of the castration complex and tries to find a logical explanation for its occurrence in both males and females. Since it must stem from a concrete experience, Starcke positions its origin in breastfeeding. More specifically his rationale is,

...the penis is imagined in a part of the body where it does not exist. We have therefore to look for an infantile situation of universal occurrence in which a penis-like part of the body is taken from another person, given to the child as his own...and then taken away from the child causing 'pain'...The situation can be none other than that of the child at breast.⁷⁰

Starcke believes that sucking at mother's breast leaves memory traces in the child that afterwards transform into a castration complex due to the suffered loss. However, he sees a logical fallacy by posing the following two questions:

How is it that the castration complex does not complain about the absence of the nipple in the child or man, but rather the absence of the penis in a woman; and why is this deficiency referred to the genitals and not to the mouth?⁷¹

Answering the second question he theorizes that the feeling of nipple loss in the mouth as an oral zone is somehow displaced to the genital region and its existing difference. In trying to answer the first question he states, "The answer is that this difference does not exist at an earlier age, and it is only at that time that the experiences have such aftereffects."⁷² Thus, the primitive castration complex arises when the mother withdraws her nipple from the still not fully satisfied infant, and this in turn accounts for the

universality of its occurrence. Furthermore, he believes that the ultimate search for happiness is a search for undoing the separation between the ego and the external world. Therefore, sucking, micturition, and defecation are at the core of this search,

...but the nipple is the leader in this triumvirate, and thus it happens that mamma as a mother becomes the central concept of the external world, for whom the desire for reunion strives, while the nipple in the form of its later double, the penis, is perceived as the centre of one's own personality, and an injury to it felt as a severe injury to the ego itself.”⁷³

Hence, Starcke is the first to propose a connection between breastfeeding and castration, specifically positioning the former as an archetype of the later appearing complex. In a sense, this also means that he carries on the work of Ophuijsen as breastfeeding is intricately connected to the attachment to the mother. Most importantly maybe is the reaffirmation of Ophuijsen's positioning of the castration complex in the oral phase.

Karl Abraham in his *Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex presented in 1920 and published in 1922*⁷⁴ discusses some psychological phenomena ascribed to castration complex and draws his conclusions from clinical observations. “Psychoanalysis...shows that a great number of women have repressed the wish to be male;”⁷⁵ and concludes that “The extraordinary frequency of these observations suggests that this wish is one common to and occurring in all women.”⁷⁶ Thus, women dislike and suffer for being women, and even more so, many of them have no idea why. He briefly accounts social phenomena for this issue, in a sense referring to Ophuijsen indication, such as lack of freedom or inability to choose a profession, “One of my patients complained about the complete uselessness of her life because she had been born a girl.”⁷⁷ This quite visionary emphasis of societal and not psychological factors behind women's repressed wish to be males is commendable. However, and very indicatively so, he quickly dismisses all these as rationalization defense mechanisms. In continuation he offers the following proof,

Direct observation of young girls shows unequivocally that at a certain age of their development they feel at a disadvantage as regards the male sex by their poverty in external genitalia. The results of the psychoanalysis of adults fully agree with this observation.⁷⁸

Thus, large number of women, if not all, have not managed to successfully repress and/or sublimate this wish and according to Abraham this causes such huge mental issues that its derivatives could be encapsulated under the so-called genital complex. However, according to him castration complex is a more suitable term as,

A girl has primarily no feeling of inferiority in regard to her own body, and does not recognise that it exhibits a defect in comparison with a boy's...incapable of recognizing a *primary* defect in her body...endeavors to represent the painfully perceived defect as a secondary loss, one resulting from castration.⁷⁹

Unlike Freud, Abraham does not believe in the primacy of the phallus for both sexes, as girls have no sense of weakness for lacking a penis but develop this later as resulting from castration. This results from their monthly periods, defloration, as well as giving birth, as all these natural occurrences, due to the present blood, are painful reminders of the castration. This is why many women aim hostilities towards men and wish to castrate them. The girl, faced with the terrible knowledge of castration, at first expects a penis to grow, and after to be gifted. The third idea is the gift of a child as a substitute for penis, expected from the father in the Oedipus phase. At the same time, hostility is aimed at the mother, along with an identification with her, because she possesses babies. "The hoped-for possession of a child is therefore destined to compensate the woman for her physical defect."⁸⁰ Thus, after the latency period the 'normal' adult woman is at peace with her genital role and desires a child. "Daily observations, however, shows us how frequently this normal end-aim of development is not attained."⁸¹ Hence, females overcome their castration complex with difficulty, if ever, an issue that Freud will consider and incorporate later, realizing the difficulties behind the girl's dissolution of the Oedipus complex.

Abraham's and Starcke's texts appear in advance to Freud's two key texts and are in collusion with his beliefs in two key aspects. Explicitly, Starcke positions the origin of castration in breastfeeding, rather the loss of the mother's breast, while Freud positions it in the phallic phase, that appears later. Abraham will later support Starcke's claim through his proposed stages of libidinal organization. In addition to this, Abraham does not support Freud's proposal of the phallus primacy but states that castration complex is a secondary formation in women, and consequently women do not 'see' themselves as damaged, impaired, or inferior to men. Hence, it seems that Freud's key texts are a response to this unwelcomed criticism, where despite the changes he proposes in his own understanding of the sexual development in humans, the key points are related to affirming the primacy of the phallus and the occurrence of castration complex between the ages of three and five, in direct opposition to Abraham and Starcke. Even more so, Freud later-on affirms the primacy of the phallus as the foundation of the psychosexual development.

Inspired by the aforementioned papers, in 1923 **Freud** introduces *The Infantile Genital Organization* as an addendum to his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* because the psychoanalytic research can "...overlook features that are of general occurrence..."⁸² The first change from his previous viewpoint is that the genital organization in childhood resembles the adult's much more, and is not limited to the object-choice only, but "...interest in the genitals and in their activity acquires a dominating significance..."⁸³ However, the main component of the infantile sexuality is the dissimilarity with the adult's or "...the fact that, for both sexes, only one genital, namely the male one, comes into account."⁸⁴ and this is the first point of conflict with Abraham's views. In the progression of the investigations, the child realizes that the penis is not a unique property of both sexes, but they deny this fact "...and believe that they *do* see a penis, all the same."⁸⁵ Hence, the lack of a penis is considered to result from an imagined, illusory castration. Freud acknowledges Starcke's contribution in tracing its origin to the loss of the breast, but maintains that its beginning is in the phallic phase, not the oral one, when "...this idea of a loss has become connected with the male genitals."⁸⁶ In this context, he asserts that the whole sexual development is a series of opposites, specifically subject vs. object in the oral

stage, active vs. passive in the anal stage, having a male genital vs. being castrated in the phallic stage, until the development is completed and culminates into male and female.⁸⁷

In *The Dissolution Of The Oedipus Complex* from 1924, **Freud** deliberates that the central phenomenon behind the destruction of the complex is still unclear, of course, because of his inability to explain the its dissolution in girls. Nevertheless, in his view two explanations are both plausible and compatible, that the Oedipus complex is demolished because of its lack of success, and/or because the time has come for its disintegration. However, Freud's interest resides in the way this is attained starting from his founded premise of phallus primacy which co-exists with the Oedipus complex. When the child advances towards the latency period, the leading role of the penis is repressed due to the threat of castration. Again, referring to Starcke, he focuses on two experiences that prepare the younglings for the loss of this "...highly valued part of the body..."⁸⁸ and these are the loss of the mother's breast and the demands of emptying the bowel, both being indirectly referenced to Starcke who introduces them. In addition, the formation of the super-ego, the fear of castration, and the latency period are all important predeterminants for the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. From this, Freud infers that "...the destruction of the Oedipus complex is brought about by the threat of castration."⁸⁹ Here however rises the inexplicability of this dissolution happening in little girls even though they also are influenced by the same predeterminants. Since, the castration complex, the super-ego formation and the latency period must be present in little girls too, Freud positions the "...essential difference..."⁹⁰ between the sexes in the premise that "...the girl accepts castration as an accomplished fact, whereas the boy fears the possibility of its occurrence."⁹¹ Therefore, the girl's Oedipus complex must be far simpler than the boy's and she simply slips towards a symbolic transference, from penis towards a baby. Here, Freud still does not account for the primary attachment with the mother, discussed by Abraham, Starcke and Ophuijsen, but will refer to this interpretation later, when he understands that girl's Oedipus Complex is more complicated than boy's, without crediting the aforementioned authors.

Referring to his previous paper, *Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex*, **Abraham** states that he has restricted himself to the “...pregenital levels of the libido.”⁹² but meanwhile a need to incorporate “...a number of psychosexual phenomena which our theory must take account of.”⁹³ has grown. Hence, in his *Origins and Growth of Object Love* (1924), Abraham, addressing the development of object-love, proposes the following stages of libidinal organization:

<i>Stages of Libidinal Organization</i>	<i>Stages of Object-love</i>	
VI. Final Genital Stage	Object-love	Post-ambivalent
V. Earlier Genital Stage (phallic)	Object-love with exclusion of genitals	
IV. Later Anal-sadistic Stage	Partial love	
III. Earlier Anal-sadistic stage	Partial love with incorporation	Ambivalent
II. Later Oral stage (cannibalistic)	Narcissism (total incorporation of object)	
I. Earlier Oral Stage (sucking)	Auto-erotism (without object)	Pre-ambivalent ⁹⁴

The proposed psychosexual organization is what makes Abraham’s paper crucial to the debate as all subsequent contributors refer to it in their writings. He extends on Freud’s proposed three-part psychosexual development by differentiating them further into six stages, based on his discoveries of the object-love. Hence, he attempts “...to show how far we are able to add new knowledge to this part of our sexual theory.”⁹⁵ With it, Abraham tracks the roots of *penis envy to an oral fixation*, based in the oral stages and being attached to the loss of the breast, just like Ophuijsen and Starcke or in the oral stage and unlike Freud, in the phallic stage.

Another point to be noted in regard to the part of the body that has been introjected is that the penis is regularly assimilated to the female breast, and that other parts of the body...can be made to stand for those two organs in a secondary way...⁹⁶

More importantly however is that Abraham shifts the discussion towards object-love and this shift becomes central to the subsequent debate. The central question now is how the girl substitutes her love for the mother with a love for her father,

It is now obvious why the emphasis of the debate shifts to the much neglected issue of the little girl's relationship with her mother, and hence to the nature of female sexuality, and away from the construction of sexual difference.⁹⁷

Finally, in the last part of the paper, Abraham establishes that the psychological process of development follows the same pattern as the biological one or "...what was at first a *part* grows into a *whole* and what was at first *whole* shrinks to a *part* and finally loses all value or continues its existence as a mere rudiment."⁹⁸ He continues on providing a whole set of instances where the psychosexual development is comparable or even follows the biological development, starting from the prenatal stages. For example, he compares the genital organization of the libido, including the two stages he proposes for object love, object-love with exclusion of genitals and object-love, to the biological organization. In his own words,

The genital organs are at first 'indifferent', and it is only later on that they become differentiated into 'male' and 'female'. This applies to the generative glands as well as to the organs of copulation. In the same way we have detected a process of differentiation in the psychosexual life of the individual.⁹⁹

Henceforth, because of the mentioned issues "...it becomes obvious that the real dispute, though it remains unacknowledged, is between Freud and Abraham..."¹⁰⁰ even though this debate is referred to as 'the Freud – Jones debate.

Helen Deutsch believes that apart from overcoming the Oedipus complex, girls have an additional two-fold task, renouncing the masculinity attached to the clitoris and discovering a new genital organ in the transition from phallic to genital phase.¹⁰¹ Since the clitoris attaches large portions of the libido, during the phallic phase of development, the

“...transition from the ‘phallic’ to the ‘vaginal’ phase...must be recognized as the hardest task in the libidinal development of the woman.”¹⁰² Even more so, the clitoris as a hidden penis even “...so inadequate a substitute for the penis...”¹⁰³ plays a key role, unlike the vagina that plays no part whatsoever. Since the clitoris “...lacks the abundant energy of the penis...”¹⁰⁴ and therefore cannot attract such energy, the female sexuality remains more infantile compared to the male. Hence, even though Deutsch is acknowledged as Freud’s opposer, she understands female sexuality rather chauvinistically. In puberty, the libido needs to come from two sources those being the whole body and the clitoris. However, the clitoris is not ready to give up its role especially due to the “...traumatic occurrence of menstruation; and this not only revives the castration wound but at the same time represents, both in the biological and the psychological sense, the disappointment of a frustrated pregnancy.”¹⁰⁵ Hence, Deutsch supports Abraham’s view that lack of penis is viewed as secondary loss and continues the discussion of a biological basis for penis envy. In addition, she believes that girl’s psychosexual development is more complex and difficult compared to boy’s, a point that Freud will later incorporate as well, complaining of the difficulties in ascertaining the female sexual development.

“Every attempt to pacify the little girl’s envy of the penis with the explanation that she also has ‘something’ is rightly doomed to complete failure; for the possession of something which one neither sees nor feels cannot give any satisfaction.”¹⁰⁶ Hence, girls are destined with more tasks and more difficult at that, and whatever shortcomings occur it is not their fault. Furthermore, she aligns the coital act with sucking and this last regression deed is realized in women “...in pregnancy in the complete identification between mother and child.”¹⁰⁷ a point that Jones supports as well. Adding to this, Deutsch believes that one becomes a woman through motherhood, or more specifically through becoming a phallic mother or “A woman who succeeds in establishing this maternal function of the vagina by giving up the claim of the clitoris to represent the penis has reached the goal of feminine development, *has become a woman.*”¹⁰⁸ pointing to the importance of not just motherhood but in a way to the early attachment with the mother, later incorporated by Freud as well.

Karen Horney starts her paper, *The Flight from Womanhood...*, by drawing attention to the one-sidedness of psycho-analytic research since it is a “...creation of a male genius, and almost all those who have developed his ideas have been men.”¹⁰⁹ She thus perceives it as being more understanding of male than female development. In this context she addresses the rise of sciences and civilization as masculine and it that sense states “Like all sciences and all valuations, the psychology of women has hitherto been considered only from the point of view of men.”¹¹⁰ In addition, she believes that women have also conformed to these masculine standards and is therefore very difficult for both men and women to get rid of this pattern in thinking.¹¹¹ Consequently, Horney wonders of the extent at which this type of thinking has affected psycho-analysis too. To prove this last point, she creates a parallel between the boys’ thinking and psycho-analytic ideas on feminine development. Thus, both believe that everyone possesses a penis, a sad discovery of this being untrue, a belief that the lack of penis is due to castration and fear of it, penis envy or regard of girls as inferior, inability to overcome such loss, and finally a life-long envy due to not possessing a penis. In this respect she even questions the psychoanalytic technique itself,

...our theoretical scientific knowledge tells us that this ground is not altogether trustworthy, but that all experience by its very nature contains a subjective factor. Thus, even our analytical experience is derived from direct observation...even when the technique is correctly applied, there is in theory the possibility of variations in this experience.¹¹²

Horney wonders why penis envy is explained through biological and not social factors and in that sense the reasons behind the interpretation of women’s social disadvantages through the realization of penis envy. Thus, she believes that from a biological standpoint, as well as from her own psycho-analytic experience, the boy’s envy for motherhood is very much disregarded and not taken into consideration. In this context she states that femininity-complex in men, envy for the breast and/or envy for motherhood is of much greater influence than the masculinity-complex in women and offers proof in the great cultural productivity of men that is far larger than that of women. However, the question

that arises is how women compensate for their penis envy and the possible explanations are that either women are truly less envious than men or have been less successful. Furthermore, Horney believes that women are far more successful in sublimating their penis envy, since most successfully the envy is transformed into a desire for a husband and a child. “From beginning to end my experience has proven to me with unchanging clearness that the Oedipus complex in women leads...to a regression to penis envy, naturally in every possible degree and shade.”¹¹³ However, Horney trusts that the dissolution of the complex is different in boys and girls, supporting Deutsch and disputing Freud. In boys the fear of castration leads to rejecting the mother as a sexual object, while in girls a rejection of both the father as a sexual object and of the feminine role happens simultaneously. In girls, the latter represents what Horney names flight from womanhood and despite principally concurring with Freud that penis envy makes the true object-love for the father possible she however sees the development of this process differently. Hence, castration phantasies are a secondary formation, when a woman takes refuge in the phantasies of being a male, female genital anxiety gets converted into a male one, that being the phantasy of castration. “Moreover, the castration-phantasy too is under the shadow of the old sense of guilt – and the penis is desired as a proof of guiltlessness.”¹¹⁴ The typical motives for flight from womanhood, originating in the Oedipus complex, “...are reinforced and supported by the actual disadvantage under which women labor in in social life.”¹¹⁵ This disadvantages according to Horney are quite abundant and she says “...a girl is exposed from birth onwards to the suggestion...of her inferiority, an experience which must constantly stimulate her masculinity complex.”¹¹⁶ In continuation, she explains that from this perspective the defense mechanism of sublimation is much more difficult for women to achieve, especially in regard to professions, and this in turn fortifies the women’s inferiority complex. Therefore, inferiority complex in girls results from multifaceted psychological and social factors and she urges for a deeper investigation of the issue.

Horney concludes her paper with a request for a more objective perspective, returning to her earlier expressed view that the sex of the observer is far more influential in determining the psychosexual development in both men and women.

...my primary intention in this paper was to indicate a possible source of error arising out of the sex of the observer, and by doing so...to get beyond the subjectivity of the masculine or the feminine standpoint and to obtain a picture of the mental development of woman which shall be truer to the facts of her nature – with its specific qualities and its differences from that of a man – that any we have hitherto achieved.”¹¹⁷

Horney therefore proposes a different view/interpretation of the psychosexual development, and even more so, doubts the technique implored in investigating the issue, by labeling it as subjective.

Emphasizing that masculinity is the starting point for female sexuality, **Carl Muller-Braunschweig** is under impression “...that we have not only emphasized this too exclusively, but have considered it as too primary.”¹¹⁸ He is therefore critical of Freud and in a sense supportive of Horney’ view of perceiving female development from a masculine perspective. In that respect he believes that from little age girls have expressions of feminine nature which are equivalent to their own unconscious knowledge of the passive part their female genital apparatus plays. Thus, the penis envy is only a defense mechanism of reaction-formation, or an unconscious desire against the passivity. In order to explain his thinking, he refers to the connection between the ego and the id, that is the safeguards and defenses the ego must revert to in order not to be subjugated to the id. Hence, the masculine id strives to subdue the woman, while the feminine id strives to be subdued to the male. In this context, the ego “...in its concern for activity...”¹¹⁹ in both males and females finds support in the masculine activity and an opposition in the feminine passivity. “This noteworthy difference in the relation of the ego to the masculine and feminine id is of the most decisive importance for the question we are considering.”¹²⁰ The girl’s wish to possess a penis or the belief that she once possessed a penis, continues to exist unconsciously because of the need to rescind the primary passivity/female attitude which is inborn. “This cancelling reaction-formation of the penis-ideal is essential for the feminine ideal-ego; on this foundation the girl’s super-ego can be established later on.”¹²¹ The ego wants to be active and independent so, the girl’s tendency towards passivity is of

grave danger to the ego. Henceforth, Muller-Braunschweig indirectly also supports the view that dissolution of the Oedipus complex as crucial for the formation of the super ego is more complex in girls than in boys. In addition, he adds a feminine and a masculine id, which directly opposes Freud as the libido is unconscious and part of the id, as its driving sexual force. Hence, according to Muller-Braunschweig if the id has dual nature, masculine and feminine, the libido cannot be masculine only.

From the beginning of his first paper, **Ernest Jones** supports Horney's claims of the bias in viewing female sexuality by stating,

Freud has more than once commented on the fact that our knowledge of the early stages in female development is much more obscure and imperfect than that of male development, and Karen Horney has forcibly, though justly, pointed out that this must be connected with the greater tendency to bias that exists on the former subject.¹²²

Thus, he aims to investigate the nature of this prejudice and possibly dismiss it and in that context, through a presentation of five case studies of homosexual females he attempts to answer "...what precisely in women corresponds with the fear of castration in men?"¹²³ In this respect, Jones even questions the concept of castration believing it to be an exemplar of what Horney determines as an unconscious male bias. Both sexes experience castration as a partial intimidation to the whole experience of sexual enjoyment so he proposes another term *aphanisis* to address the complete sexual extinction. Therefore, the conscious attitude of adults towards children is a complete prohibition of any sexual fulfillment which the child in its own turn understands as "...permanent refusal."¹²⁴ So, both sexes dread exactly the same thing, *aphanisis*, and in this sense they are the same. However, the mechanisms upon which this dread is created is fundamentally different in both sexes. While men fear that the wish for sexual gratification might be followed up with *aphanisis*, women fear that their wish for sexual gratification will be accompanied with *aphanisis*. Activity is present in both cases/sexes, disputing Muller-Braunschweig, however in females it is covert and sluggish, and "...more important...the female is much more

dependent on her partner for her gratification than is the male on his.”¹²⁵ Hence, this accounts for the most striking psychological difference between the sexes that “...leads directly to a greater dependence, as distinct from desire, of the female on the willingness and moral approbation of the partner than we usually find with the male...”¹²⁶ Consequently aphanisis partially explains the much commented passivity of females but also the primary fear in women that according to Jones is not a fear of castration but that of separation. This idea does not only directly oppose Freud, but offers a completely new view of the female psychosexual development that unfortunately has not been investigated further.

Furthermore, Jones believes that neuroses ascribed to penis envy are very little in number so, he suggests distinguishing between auto-erotic that is prescribed to the pre-Oedipus phase, and allo-erotic that is prescribed to the post-Oedipus phase, with the latter one being much more important,

It is this privation resulting from the continued disappointment at never being allowed to share the penis in coitus with the father, or thereby to obtain a baby, that reactivates the girl’s early wish to possess a penis of her own...it is this privation that is primarily the unendurable situation, the reason being that it is tantamount to the fundamental dread of aphanisis.¹²⁷

However, there is a generalization that applies to both sexes and that is that both the girl and the boy need to reject one of these: their sex or their incest and in both cases the first and essential struggle is the union of penis and vagina, whose overcoming is only possible with the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. Girls specifically “...either have an organ of the opposite sex or none at all; to have one of their own sex is out of the question.”¹²⁸ Jones, therefore rejects the generalizations of uniform sexual development in both sexes and discards the importance of penis envy in women, except in neurotic cases. In addition, unlike Freud, Jones proposes a reason and therefore an explanation for disbanding the Oedipus complex. Due to all raised issues and proposed understandings, strongly opposing

Freud's comprehension of female sexuality, this debate is henceforth known as the Freud – Jones debate.

Melanie Klein centers her article around the analysis of children, specifically between ages three and six, which in turn makes her unique compared to the others that base their conclusions on the analysis of adults. This age specific group she analyses leads her to conclude that the Oedipus complex appears earlier than proposed, arising in consequence of the painful process of weaning, followed by toilet and cleanliness training, and only lastly due to the "...anatomical differences between the sexes."¹²⁹ supporting Abraham's view. Throughout this period in both sexes the libido position is changing, from oral, to anal, to genital. However, the libidinal aim in boys is changing from receptive to penetrative but does not change in girls. Their libidinal aim remains receptive since it "...is carried over from the oral to the genital position..."¹³⁰ This leads to the girl's disappointment in her mother and the subsequent turn towards the father as a love-object. "The very onset of the Oedipus wishes, however, already becomes associated with incipient dread of castration, and feelings of guilt...a product of the formation of the super-ego"¹³¹ With this Klein positions the development of the super-ego after the development of the ego, which opposes Freud's view. More importantly, she addresses the detachment from the mother as an important developmental milestone for the little girl, something that Freud takes into consideration later. Developing her ideas further, Klein states that the child is additionally haunted by the underdevelopment of both language and cognition, thus many arising questions, especially those related to sexuality, remain unspoken and henceforth unanswered. "In both sexes the castration complex is accentuated by this feeling of ignorance."¹³² This hints the much later emphasized view in cognitive psychology of the importance of language and thinking for the overall development as well as the philosophical understanding of the overall importance of language, or its lack on the overall existence. In addition, due to the Oedipus complex and the epistemophilic need, the child is primarily concerned with the mother's womb whose contents it wishes to possess. Thus, this triad of needing to know, wanting to appropriate, and feeling guilty because of the Oedipus complex "...ushers in a phase of development in both sexes which is of vital importance, hitherto not sufficiently recognized. It consists of a very early identification

with the mother.”¹³³ Hence, Klein stresses the importance of primary identification with the mother for both sexes, but in the case of girls indicates the two-fold process in their development consisting of this early attachment that through the process of detachment needs to convert to a mature identification. Consequently, the girl is faced with a much more complex process of psychosexual development and in this sense, Klein supports the views of Deutsch and Horney. From this early identification with the mother Klein ascertains a femininity phase that is exclusive to males, which starts during the anal-sadistic phase, and has three aims; desire for children; jealousy of future siblings, and desire for the womb that contains the penis, supporting and expanding on Horney’s propositions,

Thus the femininity phase is characterized by anxiety relating to the womb and the father’s penis, and this anxiety subjects the boy to the tyranny of a super-ego which devours, dismembers and castrates and is formed from the image of father and mother alike.¹³⁴

The greater the fixation during this femininity phase, the greater the corresponding rivalry with the mother, hence women. Both the castration complex in women and the femininity complex in men are very important but the latter is much more obscure. Klein believes this to be so because the early futile desire for a child brings up a displacement in intellectuality and the sense of inferiority is masked with a sense of superiority “...from his possession of a penis...”¹³⁵ As a result of the femininity complex, aggression arises in males, coinciding with their protest against the feminine role and at the same time their fear of the mother. This also explains why “...man’s rivalry with women will be far more asocial than his rivalry with his fellow-men, which is largely prompted through the genital position.”¹³⁶ In girls, similar like boys, the course of weaning and anal deprivations is turning them away from the mother, a process that is addressed by both Ophuijsen and Starcke. Now the genitals “...begin to influence her mental development.”¹³⁷ In addition, she agrees with Deutsch that “...the genital development of the woman finds its completion in the successful displacement of oral libido on to the genital.”¹³⁸ Klein is convinced that the receptive role of the female genital as well as the developing hatred for the mother who

possesses the father's penis, are strong motivators for the girl to be turning towards her father.

Klein believes that in both girls and boys the identification with the mother happens during the anal-sadistic tendencies when they wish to deprive/devour/destroy the mother, however in girls this identification stems from the Oedipus impulses while in boys from the castration anxiety. If in girls, this identification happens during an earlier stage of development it will interfere with the genital development. Thus, dread of the mother and her super-ego compels the little girl to give up identifying with her and re-direct identification to/with her father.

“The little girl’s epistemophilic impulse is first roused by the Oedipus complex; the result is that she discovers her lack of penis.”¹³⁹ This is a cause for, yet another hate wave directed towards the mother, which almost simultaneously arouses feelings of guilt, and thus referral to punishment. Of course, this “...exercises a profound influence on the whole castration complex.”¹⁴⁰ Later, when the phallic phase and the castration complex are in full swing, this grievance for the penis lack is magnified further. Thus, the turning away from the mother and towards the father is not because of the lack of penis like Freud believes. Instead, the lack of penis “...operates only as a reinforcement...”, while “...the deprivation of the breast...”¹⁴¹ is the most profound cause for turning towards the father. Now, the little girl tries to overcompensate the hatred she feels for her mother “...through a fresh love-relation with her.” Against this new love-relation operates the castration complex which makes a masculine attitude difficult, and the hatred of mother which springs from the earlier situations. Hate and rivalry of the mother, however, again lead to abandoning the identification with the father and turning to him as the object to be secured and loved.¹⁴² Finally, the way in which the girl’s psychosexual development is more complex compared to boys is the following “...the boy does in reality possess the penis,...the little girl has only the unsatisfied desire for motherhood, and of this, too, she has but a dim and uncertain, though a very intense, awareness.”¹⁴³ The little girl remembers the destructive tendencies directed at the mother and thus expects retribution, even in destroying her own motherhood capacity. “Thus the girl lacks the powerful support which the boy derives from his

possession of the penis, and which she herself might find in the anticipation of motherhood.”¹⁴⁴ So, the girl’s anxiety about her own, future motherhood is comparable to the boy’s anxiety for his penis/castration. In this sense, Klein concludes that “...boy’s anxiety is determined by the paternal and the girl’s by the maternal super-ego.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, Klein presents a paper that has very strong arguments against Freud’s understanding of the psychosexual development in both boys and girls, building up on the previous contributors. She cements the importance of the earliest experiences specifically breastfeeding for the subsequent development, argues for the importance of the primary attachment with the mother, ascertains a femininity phase for males, points to the difficulties of the female psychosexual development and establishes a certainty of a feminine super-ego. In her original work she even launches the importance of cognitive factors for the overall psychosexual development maintaining a rounded view of the human psyche.

For the better part of the paper **Jeanne Lampl de Groot** unquestionably supports Freud and his views on penis envy and castration complex. In this setting she believes that Freud’s discovery of the connection between the castration and the Oedipus complex was of an exceptionally significant value. However, she does admit that “...understanding of the processes in male children has been carried much further than with the analogous processes in females.”¹⁴⁶ However, in the attempt to overcome this, according to de Groot’s understanding, Freud introduces a new theory according to which in girls the castration complex appears first and is then followed by the Oedipus complex. However, de Groot admits that even with this theory, when the little girl accepts her lack of penis or when she develops penis envy some problems remain, one of which is “How should the little girl who never possessed a penis and therefore never knew its value from her own experience, regard it as so precious?”¹⁴⁷ Thus, she offers an explanation introducing the so called negative Oedipus complex. Specifically, the psychosexual development in both boys and girls is analogous, and even when she discovers her lack of penis, she has an equivalent organ, the clitoris. Thus, the girl behaves exactly like a boy. This allows for the assumption that if the outward behavior is similar then the inward processes are also similar, or the girl enters a so-called negative Oedipus complex, wanting the mother for herself and needing

to get rid of the father. However, the girl now realizes that "...the boy's genital is larger, stronger, and more visible than her own..." and through a comparison she "...must feel her own organ to be inferior."¹⁴⁸ Despite the initial denial of the castration the little girl must accept this fact and is now in quite a predicament as her narcissism suffers and in addition, she cannot fulfil her love for the mother. This marks the start of difference in the psychic development between the sexes as "To the boy castration was only a threat, which can be escaped...To the girl it is an accomplished fact..."¹⁴⁹ Thus, to overcome this the little girl must surpass the negative Oedipus complex by transforming the love for her mother into an identification with her and choosing her father as the new love-object. In other words, the girl has transformed the negative Oedipus complex into a positive one. In summary, while Freud believes that the Oedipus complex in girls is only possible because of the preceding castration complex, de Groot "...in contradiction to Freud...is assuming that the castration complex in female children is a secondary formation and that its precursor is negative."¹⁵⁰ In addition, she strengthens the focus on the relationship between the girl and her mother as an important precursor in the female sexual development.

The final paper of the debate belonging to **Ernest Jones** is significant due to two reasons, it summarizes the points of conflict between the psychoanalytic societies in Vienna and London and focuses on female psychosexual development since he ascertains it as probably the main source of the dispute. "For some years now it has been apparent now that many analysts in London do not see eye to eye with their colleagues in Vienna on a number of important topics: among these I might instance the early development of sexuality, especially in the female, the genesis of the super-ego and its relation to the Oedipus complex..."¹⁵¹ His point is that essentially "...there was more femininity in the young girl than analysts generally admit, and that the masculine phase through which she may pass is more complex in its motivation than is commonly thought,"¹⁵² In this context he mentions that many female analysts have supported this view, specifically mentioning Karen Horney as the first one pointing to this, but paying tribute to Melanie Klein as well due to being a child analyst and hence reporting "...direct observations of inestimable value."¹⁵³ Then he continues by appraising the themes of main interest and underlying the points of agreement and disagreement. In that context, he first lists the notion of inborn bisexuality that might

be probable however cautioning that the "...assumption is very hard to prove,"¹⁵⁴ and therefore should not be taken at face value. Bisexuality, especially in females is a notion that Freud holds very dear. Next, he moves onto the huge role the mother has in the first, and probably subsequent, years of the child's life, and specifically Freud's believe that the sphere of first attachment cannot be pierced/reached because of a great repression. Thus, Jones suggests "...finer analysis of the girl's earliest period of attachment to the mother..."¹⁵⁵ believing that this will iron out the differences in opinion about the later stages of development. Finally, he moves on to the "...crux of all the problems..." or "Is this first stage a concentration on a single object, the mother?"¹⁵⁶, "And is it a masculine attitude, as clitoric masturbation would seem to indicate?"¹⁵⁷ According to Jones, these views are Freud's and since the girl has to change both her sexual attitude and her love-object, the difficulties she experiences in her development can very well be attributed to the complexity of overcoming these issues.

After summarizing the thus far views, Jones points that London's psychoanalytic school has different conclusions that were reached through analysis on adults, but more importantly through Klein's analysis of young children. According to their conclusions the girl's attitude is feminine, not masculine, because girls are "...typically receptive and acquisitive."¹⁵⁸ This also means that the girl is more concerned with the inside of her body and in that sense, she regards her mother as someone who is effective in filling herself with things that the girl wants badly. This is not however the way a man, or Freud for that matter, would perceive her.

The dissatisfaction with the nipple and the wish for a more adequate penis-like object to suck arises early and is repeated at a later period in the familiar clitoris dissatisfaction and penis envy. The first wish for a kind of penis is thus induced by oral frustration.¹⁵⁹

Therefore, he concludes that the girl regards the father "...as a rival for the mother's milk."¹⁶⁰ However, in the second year of her life, the girl starts exhibiting the commencement of the Oedipus complex, or what Freud refers as the pre-Oedipal

attachment, since real feminine love already appears, represented through the desire for the father's sexual organ and a conflicting relationship with the mother. Compared to the later emerging Oedipus complex, this one is much more unconscious because it is more deeply repressed.¹⁶¹ Simultaneously, the girl experiences sadistic tendencies, related to the oral, urethral, and anal areas, and the resulting anxiety, according to Jones is much harder to deal with compared to the boys. There are two main reasons for this; one is that the girl has no external organ to focus her anxiety on; and second is that the girl's sexual rival and the object of sadism are one and the same person, her mother. In other words "...the girl has for two reasons less opportunity to exteriorize her sadism."¹⁶² Jones adds that exactly "This explains the remarkable attachment to the mother, and dependence on her, to which Freud has called special attention..."¹⁶³ Thus, he believes that the cause of the differences between the psychoanalytic societies in London and Vienna regarding the later stages of development, stem exactly from "...these fundamental ones."¹⁶⁴ More specifically, Jones believes that there is an agreement on the importance of the oral stage and it being the archetype of later femininity. In this context he points to the sucking nature of the vagina as proposed by Helene Deutsch. Even though the evidence of the early vaginal sensitivity is vague, he believes that "...several women analysts...have produced, if not conclusive, at least highly significant evidence of its occurrence together with breastfeeding."¹⁶⁵ Thus, in Jones's opinion "...the view that the vaginal attitude does not develop before puberty."¹⁶⁶ is no longer sustainable. In this context, Jones attributes the vaginal obscurity in childhood to the following causes: phantasies for a penis and a baby that are in direct conflict with the rival mother, the vagina being the seat of deepest anxieties since it is a treacherous organ that must be kept hidden, and finally its lack of a physical function before puberty and the menstrual cycle for which reason it cannot be used for reassurance.¹⁶⁷ The strongest disparity however, according to Jones, lies in the clitoris/penis issues, which he summarizes in the following manner

...according to one view the girl hates her mother because she has disappointed her wish that her clitoris were a penis, whereas according to the other view the reason that the girl wishes that her clitoris were a penis is that she feels hatred for her mother which she cannot express. Similarly, according to one view the girl comes

to love her father because she is disappointed in her clitoris, whereas according to the other view she wishes to change her clitoris for a penis because of the obstacles in the way of loving her father.¹⁶⁸

In continuation, Jones points out to the confusion arising from using the phrase ‘penis – wish’ specifying that both schools agree there is a wish that the clitoris was a penis, however the motivation behind this wish is understood differently. He believes that all agree with Karen Horney’s description of the envy being a simple auto-erotic envy and “According to one view, however, this is the main motive for the wish, whereas for other authors it accounts for only the smaller part.”¹⁶⁹ However, Jones believes the secondary motives for penis-wish to be of far greater importance and is related to the girl’s own coping with the sadism she feels towards her parents. Namely, “...the fundamental mental expression of this sadism, the wish to tear a way into the mother’s body and devour the father’s penis she believes to be incorporated there.”¹⁷⁰ Thus, the psychoanalytic society in Vienna calls this the pre-Oedipal stage, whereas the psychoanalytic society in London, or Ernest Jones specifically, includes it in the ‘Oedipus complex’. Furthermore, he believes that phantasy of possessing a penis relieves the sadism and the consequent anxiety. Specifically,

...the value the idea of the penis has for the girl is essentially bound up with its capacity to excrete and direct the flow of urine. Helene Deutsch and Karen Horney have called special attention to this association between penis envy and urethral sadism...¹⁷¹

Hence, “the most successful way of dealing with repressed urethral sadism would be by finding a way in which it can be expressed in reality and thus provide the reassurance of its not being deadly.”¹⁷² Thus, the girl’s idea of the penis would be an ambivalent one, explicitly an evil one that can be used as weapon of attack towards the mother in the way the girl imagines the father does, and a good one that can be restored to the mother, or can be used to neutralize the internalized, ‘swallowed’, destructive penis, or can restore the castrated father through identification followed by the development of an intact penis.¹⁷³

In Jones's words, "Behind the girl's wish that her clitoris were a penis, therefore, is the most complex network of fantasies."¹⁷⁴ Their purpose is only partially libidinal but mostly defensive, to put the sadism under control. Hence, Jones supports Klein's view that the girl's repression of femininity stems from hatred and fear of her mother, and opposes Freud's belief that this repression arises from a masculine attitude. This leads to the conclusion that there is "...such a thing as a primary natural wish for a penis on the girl's part, but...not as a masculine striving in clitoris terms, but the normal feminine desire to incorporate a man's penis inside her body."¹⁷⁵ This leads straightforwardly towards the wish for a baby, or a conversion of the penis into a child. In Jones's own words this "...is in contradiction to Freud's view that the girl's wish for the child is mainly compensatory for her disappointment in not having a penis of her own."¹⁷⁶

When discussing the transition from the phallic phase to manifest femininity, as Jones warned at the beginning of this exposition, the divided opinions between the schools continue to exist. Here, Jones openly states "...just as I am more skeptical about the existence of the phallic phase as a stage in development, so I am more skeptical than the Viennese seem to be about the ides of its passing."¹⁷⁷ Namely, he believes that it would be more accurate to use the phrase 'phallic position' since the observed phenomena is related to an emotional attitude and not a stage in libidinal development. "What Viennese analysts describe as the passing of the phallic phase is rather the period in which they recognize the femininity of the girl which London analysts think they can recognize earlier in its more repressed state."¹⁷⁸ The question that remains is "...why the femininity is often less repressed, and therefore more visible, as the girl grows..."¹⁷⁹ Thus, Jones focuses us on his earlier presented paper *The Early Development of Female Sexuality* where he makes a distinction between the pre-phallic and post-phallic phases whose separation is manifested with the discovery of the sexual difference. This discovery leads to hostility and resentment towards the mother, which is a characteristic of the latter phase. Freud however, couples "...these two events together not only chronologically but intrinsically. The reasons he gives for the girl emerging from the phallic phase can be summarized in one word – disappointment."¹⁸⁰ Thus, the girl exchanges her own sex and her love object, male to female and mother to father. Or, paraphrasing Le Groot the girl has to navigate through an

inverted Oedipus condition before arriving at the regular one.¹⁸¹ In London however, Jones states that the latter phallic phase is “...essentially a defense against the *already existing* Oedipus complex...therefore, the problem of why the defensive phallic phase comes to an end puts itself quite differently...”¹⁸² Jones believes that both Freud and him agree that this is the outcome of adapting to reality, but for Jones, unlike Freud, “Fundamentally they strengthen ego development at the expense of phantasy.”¹⁸³ This penis phantasy is given up for three main reasons. One, because it is recognized as a phantasy and therefore recognized as not offering satisfactory protection. In other words, the phantasy does not work well since “...it does not give the reassurance of external reality, which is what the girl needs and is what she is beginning to find elsewhere.”¹⁸⁴ Two, the anxiety lessens and hence the need for defense lessens since the girl’s ego is stronger so, she is able to see her mother more realistically as an “...affectionate person rather than as the imaginary ogre of her phantasy.”¹⁸⁵ Added to this is the girl’s greater independence from her mother and thus her ability to be more sadistic towards the environment than towards herself. Three, other defenses are available to the girl, because she “...is now learning to exteriorize both her libido and her anxiety.”¹⁸⁶ As the young girl gets bolder in her entitlements, she boldens to show open rivalry to her mother. Thus, her resentment

...has not only the meaning Freud attaches to it...the reproach that her mother gave her only a clitoris, it is the reproach that her mother had always kept the breast and father’s penis in her possession and not allowed the girl to incorporate them into her body...The sight of a boy’s penis is not the sole traumatic event that changes her life; it is only the last link in a long chain.¹⁸⁷

In conclusion, Jones summarizes that the main difference between Vienna and London are regarding the early Oedipus complex accompanied with oral disappointment. As a result, the little girl escapes in the phallic phase and later resumes her normal development. This view seems more plausible to Jones or “...more in accord with the ascertainable facts, and also intrinsically more probable, than one which would regard her femininity to be the result of an external experience (viewing a penis).”¹⁸⁸ In other words, he believes that femininity develops progressively and does not view women as defect men or a

“...permanently disappointed creature struggling to console herself with secondary substitutes alien to her true nature. The ultimate question is whether a woman is born or made.”¹⁸⁹

Jones’s paper seals the debate until it is revived by Lacan years later, “But perhaps it is more accurate to see the controversy sealed, if not encapsulated, in Freud’s 1931 and 1932 essays on the topic.”¹⁹⁰ More specifically, there is an evident shift in Freud’s ideas on female sexuality in the 1920 when he abandons the symmetrical sexual development of both sexes and starts insisting on the supremacy of the phallic phase for both sexes. Even though some of the papers included here predate the included Freud’s papers from 1923 and 1924, “...the controversy was really triggered by these two important contributions.”¹⁹¹ As the debate takes its course, two sides emerge of those who support Freud, like Deutsch and De Groot, and those who oppose him like Jones, Horney and Klein, the latter two being Abraham’s students. The debate itself forces Freud to focus his attention to the pre-Oedipal attachment of the girl to her mother, but it raises other important issues related to the nature of female sexuality, the nature of the libido, the privileged role of the phallus, and the castration complex itself and that it “...should not be narrowed down to the loss of the penis...”¹⁹² and Starcke proposes that it should be viewed a symbolic concept. Hence, at this point Freud’s castration complex cannot explain the difference between the sexes. Even more so, since Abraham proposes that both sexes fear castration, the issue of penis envy becomes superfluous. This is the point where the debate shifts towards the neglected mother-daughter relationship and with that towards the nature of femininity and away from the development of sexual differences. Freud now stands alone as both his opponents and his supporters look for answers in biology and anatomy, so he declares,

All of you ought to distinguish more clearly and cleanly between the psychological and the biological. You want to establish a percurrent parallelism between both and you don’t shrink from inventing to this intent, facts that are not proven, and in the process you doubtlessly have to declare as reactive and regressive much that is primary...I only want to stress once more that it is necessary to keep the Psa. just as

independent from the biology as we are used to keep it apart from anatomy and physiology...

There is only one libido, a male one.¹⁹³

Jacques Lacan

Freud claims that there is only masculine libido. What does that mean if not that a field that certainly is not negligible is thus ignored. That field is the one of all beings that take on the status of a woman – assuming that being takes on anything whatsoever of her destiny.¹⁹⁴

Jacques Lacan revives Freud's ideas after being expelled from the psychoanalytic community by offering his interpretations on femininity and female sexual development through heavy reliance on language. The above passage gives us a glance at his interpretations, acknowledging that women are kept in the domain of namelessness and powerlessness. It also very likely represents a rare point of diversion from Freud's understanding of sexuality, specifically female sexuality. Lacan "...dedicated himself to the task of refinding and reformulating the work of Sigmund Freud."¹⁹⁵ In that sense, he contributed to and continued the debate between Freud and Neo-Freudians, supporting Freud and extending on his theory with the help of linguistics to represent that sexuality, even the unconscious, are constructs. The review of his work related to penis envy, castration complex and femininity will be done conceptually.

According to Lacan the human psyche can be divided in three domains, real, imaginary and symbolic. The domain of the real, developmentally speaking, is the earliest one and marks a state when language is still non-existent, and everything can be reduced to needs. The imaginary domain corresponds to the mirror stage, in which the child recognizes itself in the mirror for the first time, hence recognizing itself and at the same time distinguishing itself as the Other. Along with this, the child enters the imaginary domain and moves from needs to desires. Here it is important to mention Lacan's distinction between needs and desires, with needs being instinctual and related to objects, and desires being related to people and representing our necessity for recognition. Finally, with the entrance into the world of language and narrative, the child enters the symbolic domain and with that becomes inevitably disconnected from the real. The symbolic domain represents an

essential area for explaining sexuality, and with that femininity, castration complex and penis envy, and it is all about desire.¹⁹⁶

Lacan has been much influenced by structuralism, and consequently, with the help of linguistics, he tries to discover the constitutive elements of the things he investigates. Since “...reality is founded and defined by discourse.”¹⁹⁷ Lacan believes that the starting point of analytic discourse is the subject and in that sense he states that as soon as the being starts speaking it inhabits the position of a signifier and thus becomes subject.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, speaking institutes the subject into a signifier, since it uses speech to signal its needs, wants, desires and “From then on, everything is played out for him on the level of phantasy...”¹⁹⁹ As the language of others that relates to us makes up our unconscious, it “...is the discourse of the other...it is the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated.”²⁰⁰ Hence, the unconscious “...is constituted by the effects of speech on the subject, it is the dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effects of speech, consequently the unconscious is structured like a language.”²⁰¹ Being constituted by the effects of speech, “...*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other.*”²⁰² and as such it is elevated to the symbolic or “...in unconscious matters, the relation of the subject to the symbolic is fundamental.”²⁰³ Hence, Lacan describes the unconscious as the totality of all effects speech has on the subject and as such it represents the discourse of the other, or it represents the effects of speech of others on the subject. Exactly due to this role in the construction of a subject, the unconscious belongs to the symbolic. Being placed in the symbolic Lacan’s unconscious occupies the central role in sexuality as “The reality of the unconscious is sexual reality—an untenable truth.”²⁰⁴ In addition, the unconscious, the phallus and castration complex are intertwined as “...at the heart of the...unconscious, we are dealing with that organ – determined in the subject by the inadequacy organized in the castration complex.”²⁰⁵ More specifically, “In my reference to the unconscious, I am dealing with the relation to the organ.”²⁰⁶ Hence, Lacan reduces the fundamental nature of the unconscious to the phallus through which castration complex is epitomized. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the phallus has a central position in Lacan’s work and is indispensable for explaining penis envy, castration complex and femininity.

Lacan distinguishes between the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic phallus, with a focus on the latter two. The child realizes that mother's desire is directed somewhere else, and with this realization the dyad between the mother and child becomes a triad that now involves the object of her desire. Hence, the imaginary phallus comes into play as this is the child's imagination of what must it become to fulfil mother's desire and return to the idyllic dyad.

We're told that a mother's requirement is to equip herself with an imaginary phallus, and it's very clearly explained to us how she uses her child as a quite adequate real support for this imaginary prolongation. As to the child, there's not a shadow of doubt - whether male or female, it locates the phallus very early on and, we're told, generously grants it to the mother...²⁰⁷

However, instead of harmonization, the dyad finds itself in conflict "Because the phallus is, as it were, the wonderer. It is elsewhere."²⁰⁸ Consequently, the child fears its loss while in the mother "...nostalgia for, the phallus is established."²⁰⁹ This imaginary lack of the phallus instigates "...imaginary exchanges between mother and child..."²¹⁰ in which the father has no role "...except to represent the vehicle, the holder, of the phallus. The father, as father, has the phallus - full stop."²¹¹ Lacan does caution that the phallus should not be equalized to a penis as it does not represent a physical body part but a symbolic representation of something that everybody wants but no one can have, and yet only the father has it. It is the personification of "...our wish for completeness."²¹² and in that sense it represents our lack. Despite this explanation, Lacan cements Freud's position on the importance of the phallus along with the father as its bearer, even though he addresses them symbolically. At the same time, he diverts the attention from the mother, something both Freud and his disciples were deeply concerned with. The fact that the phallus serves as a lack along with the child's realization that he cannot offer anything real to the mother in the sense of the phallus is what places the phallus in the symbolic. This is also Lacan's basis for his recurring criticism of Neo-Freudians and in that sense, he characterizes it as an "...example of a passion for a doctrine..."²¹³ Lacan specifically focuses on Ernest Jones and his support of Melanie Klein, stating that "...he cannot therefore separate himself from

her doctrine..."²¹⁴ referring to Jones's representation of the phallus as an object and tracing it as a recurrence of the Oedipal phase, in support of Klein's understanding. Therefore, the phallus "...is even less the organ, penis or clitoris, which it symbolizes...the phallus is a signifier..."²¹⁵ thus placing it in the symbolic. However, the phallus, is chosen as the thing "...that stands out as the most easily seized upon..."²¹⁶ or as "...something whose symbolic usage is possible because it can be seen, because it is erected."²¹⁷ in both real and symbolic copulation. This, statement so it seems, reduces Lacan's distinction of imaginary and symbolic phallus to a real one since it is the most visible thing, the things that stands out, especially when erected. The subject gains access to the phallus as a signifier, only in the desire of the Other, but since the phallus is veiled, the subject must recognize the desire, hence must recognize the phallus. In Lacan's words, "...the phallus can only play its role as veiled..."²¹⁸ as it is a signifier of the termination "...which it inaugurates by its own disappearance."²¹⁹ Postulating the phallus in this manner, Lacan corrects Melanie Klein's supposition that the child captures the fact that "...the mother 'contains' the phallus."²²⁰ and states "If the desire of the mother *is* the phallus then the child wishes to be the phallus so as to satisfy that desire."²²¹ The repercussions of this are that the subject (child) cannot offer anything real to the Other (mother) "...which corresponds to this phallus..." and this is what places the phallus in the symbolic. It is worth noting, once again, that despite placing the phallus in the symbolic, Lacan nevertheless traces its importance due to being the most visible thing in copulation, regardless of whether it is a real or a symbolic one, being very close to Freud's understanding of the penis and its respective role. Thus, despite stressing the phallus as position, as something everyone wants to have, a signifier, by choosing due to being erected, being most visible, something that can be easily seized, and simply choosing its name, it seems that this is a very misogynistic position and it becomes exceedingly problematic perceiving Lacan as a proponent of femininity.

Commenting the female sexual development, Lacn states,

For the woman, the realization of her sex is not accomplished in the Oedipus complex in a way symmetrical to that of the man's, not by identification with the mother, but on the contrary by identification with the paternal object, which assigns

her an extra detour...But the disadvantage the woman finds herself in with respect to access to her own sexual identity, with respect to her sexualization as a woman, is turned to her advantage in hysteria owing to her imaginary identification with the father, who is perfectly accessible to her, particularly by virtue of his position in the composition of the Oedipus complex. For the man, on the other hand, the path is more complex.²²²

More specifically, the female's advantage is that with the help of hysteria she can create an imaginary identification with her father, the phallus bearer, who is thanks to the Oedipus complex both reachable and available. Hysteria is after all a mental disorder that provokes physical issues without physical basis, hence everything is 'imagined'. As "...the phallus is a symbol to which there is no correspondent, no equivalent."²²³ this becomes a matter of dissymmetry for the girl which will lead her to the issue of castration. Hence, castration complex becomes inevitability for both males and females. As the female "...is characterized by an absence, a void, a hole, which means that it happens to be less desirable than is the male sex for what he has...is provocative, and...an essential dissymmetry appears."²²⁴ So, females are a lack that makes them less provocative and desirable, bringing us back to Freud according to whom girls envy the penis as they would like to have such a marvelous attachment to their bodies. So, the phallus continues to be a singular signifier of value that the woman envies, which leads her towards experiencing the castration complex that will in turn direct her entire development. In addition, navigating the symbolized relationship represented through the Oedipus complex is directly linked with her own sexuality. More specifically, the Oedipus complex is essentially "...the law of the prohibition of the mother..."²²⁵ as the mother is the mediator that invokes the father and "...could be quite well constituted even when the father was not there."²²⁶ In this sense, the Oedipus complex means two things, that the father prohibits the mother through symbolical intervention and that the father is preferred by the mother.²²⁷ This brings forth "...the father as a signifier..."²²⁸ and in consequence the Oedipus complex is introduced. The driving force behind the Oedipus complex is castration and on it "...two happenings depend...the boy becomes a man...the girl becomes a woman..."²²⁹. This is the moment where the boy realizes that the father has intervened and succeeded in his "...castration

inflicted on the mother, on the mother as imagined at the level of the subject...”²³⁰ while the things for the little girl “...are much simpler...she knows where it is, she knows where she has to go to get it, it is towards the father towards the one who has it...”²³¹ This is the reason behind the girl’s simplified Oedipus complex, when the father intervenes symbolically and forbids the mother, she knows where the phallus that she needs is. Since the subject desires an object and simultaneously wants to possess it, which is “...a position structured within the very duality of the signifier and the signified.”²³² this will displace the function of a man or a woman from the imaginary into the symbolic and this is what allows “...the woman to truly accept her feminine function.”²³³ In other words, the girl desires the phallus and at the same time wants to retain it, which will place her femininity in the symbolic and hence she will finally understand how to become a woman.

Lacan’s thoughts on femininity permeate his work since the beginning, however his most important contributions come in his later efforts. In that sense, *Encore* represents “...Lacan’s most direct attempt to take up the question of feminine sexuality...in a way that goes beyond Freud.”²³⁴ Taking into consideration the historical thought development on female sexuality, Lacan summarizes that while at first the castration complex was based on paternal repression, the Neo-Freudian debate “...directed its interests towards the frustrations coming from the mother, not that such a distortion has shed any light on the complex”²³⁵ He does maintain and even enhance the importance of the father in the castration complex and through that onto the whole psychosexual development. Furthermore, “...the key position of the phallus in libidinal development is a paradox exclusive to the psychoanalytic approach...where the question of the phallic phase for the woman becomes even more problematic, in that having unleashed a fury...”²³⁶ Lacan believes that in order for the aforementioned issues and with that the debate to be resolved, a clarification of the terms imaginary, real, and symbolic is needed since we need “...to remind ourselves that images and symbols *for* the woman cannot be isolated from images and symbols *of* the woman.”²³⁷ Hence, the imaginary is the central intervening structure in our psychic life and “...subject sets itself up as operating, as human, as I, from the moment the symbolic system appears.”²³⁸ In that sense, the problematic issues arise with the assigned influence a woman might have because of the lack of recognition that the debated

issues of castration complex and/or penis envy belong in the imaginary and the symbolic. Hence, Lacan refers to Jones and Klein again, criticizing them for "...persistent failure to acknowledge that the Oedipal fantasies..."²³⁹ are not located in the maternal body but "...originate from the reality presupposed by the Name of the Father."²⁴⁰ In this way, Lacan reinforces his focus on the man, father as central. The resulting indication will possibly give "...some idea of how to deflate the monstrous conceptualization..."²⁴¹ that illustrates "...how everything gets ascribed to the woman in so far as she represents, in the phallocentric dialectic, the absolute Other."²⁴² For that reason, he once again takes into consideration "...penis envy..."²⁴³ which "...opens up the question of whether the real penis, in that it actually belongs to her sexual partner, commits the woman to an attachment..."²⁴⁴ Therefore, the phallus is now again at the center, as a master discourse around which everything plays out. In this respect, castration complex stems from the decisive knowledge that mother does not have a phallus but desires one and in consequence "...the conjunction is signed between desire, in so far as the phallic signifier is its mark, and the threat of the nostalgia of lack-in-having."²⁴⁵ This puts the woman in a rather awkward position as

...in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that the woman will reject an essential part of her femininity...It is for what she is not that she expects to be desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the one to whom she addresses her demand for love.²⁴⁶

The woman needs to pretend being the phallus to instigate a desire and will therefore deny an indispensable part of her femaleness. Therefore, she expects desire and love for what she is not rather than for what she is, as she is the void and not the fullness. In this way she finds her signifier, the signifier of her desire and love, in the Phallus that is part of the Other, part of what the Other is.

Here Lacan introduces one of his central concepts, *jouissance*, which he deconstructs using analytic discourse to "...what serves no purpose."²⁴⁷ but at the same time "...everything revolves around phallic *jouissance*..."²⁴⁸ Namely, "...having this bizarre

apparatus which is called penis, which ensures copulation is sustained by a certain *jouissance*.²⁴⁹ The subject is prohibited from it through embarrassment as there is a prohibition to play with ones penis “And this barrier which embarrasses him is very precisely desire itself.”²⁵⁰ Hence, evoking master-slave dialectic, Lacan states that *jouissance* is a privilege reserved for the master, that the slave needs to renounce. However, “It is precisely on the side of the slave that *jouissance* remains, and, precisely, because he renounces it.²⁵¹ At the same time, the master remains on the margins of *jouissance*, grieving for it. So, *jouissance* itself refers to extreme pleasure but one that “...transgresses this law (the pleasure principle) and, in that respect, it is *beyond* the pleasure principle.”²⁵² and can possibly be described as the pleasure at its limits, as painful pleasure. *Jouissance* and language are intertwined as reality itself “...is approached with apparatuses of *jouissance*...there's no other apparatus than language. That is how *jouissance* is fitted out in speaking beings.”²⁵³ As the unconscious is structured like a language, language must be clarified and illuminated because it is also the apparatus of *jouissance*. In addition, *jouissance* is the link to sexuality, castration and the unconscious,

The essence of castration and the link of sexuality to the unconscious both reside in this factor - that sexual difference is refused to knowledge, since it indicates the point where the subject of the unconscious subsists by being the subject of non-knowledge. It is from here that what cannot be spoken of sexual difference gets transposed into the question with which the Other, from the place of its lack, interrogates the subject on *jouissance*.²⁵⁴

Here it is important to refer to his sexuation graph in which he marks the feminine and the masculine, or specifically where he “...maps out two modes of relation to the Other, correlated with sexual difference.”²⁵⁵ The masculine position is marked as deferring to the symbolic law, of the phallus as a signifier and of castration, while the female position is marked with the possibility of escaping the law and not being entirely succumbed to castration or the phallus as a signifier.²⁵⁶ In consequence, Lacan distinguishes several types of *jouissance*, a female one, a male one and a phallic *jouissance*. The feminine and masculine *jouissance* do not constitute a polarity, so it is redundant to speak of it. This

difference however has "...a single intermediary...the fact that in feminine jouissance there can enter as an object the desire of the man as such. This means that the question of phantasy is posed for the woman."²⁵⁷ The fact that the phallus can enter the woman, and keeping in mind that the phallus is a privileged symbolic signifier, only the woman would be propounded to fantasy. Masculine jouissance is in essence reduced to phallic jouissance and Lacan represents it is the men's obstacle to enjoy the woman's body as he enjoys the jouissance of the organ in a masturbatory sense. Hence, everyone enjoys or wants to enjoy the phallus, which in essence is phallic jouissance. However, the man must recognize that as a signifier he approaches the sexual intercourse from a castrated position "...*quoad castrationem*, in other words insofar as he has a relation to phallic jouissance."²⁵⁸ as he cannot enjoy the phallus, he can only enjoy it indirectly, through her enjoyment. However, that is also problematic as women, according to Lacan, are primarily mothers as "...Don't talk to me about women's secondary sexual characteristics because...it is those of the mother that take precedence in her."²⁵⁹ and "Woman serves a function in the sexual relationship only *qua* mother."²⁶⁰ There it is, Lacan's view or even possibly anger at women not being solely devoted to their partners, specifically their phallus, in the sexual relationship since they are before everything else mothers. In addition, another thing that must be taken into consideration is narcissism, as the body is something that enjoys itself as all relationships are based on "...narcissistic relation by which the subject becomes an object worthy of love...he tries to induce the Other into a mirage relation in which he convinces him of being worthy of love."²⁶¹ Therefore, from the moment it sees itself in the mirror, the child and later adult centers its relationships around self-love and hence encourages others views to uphold its own, as one that should be loved. However, it is unclear how does a woman, representing void, lack and absence, seeing herself in a narcissistic manner. Nevertheless, this narcissism is what jouissance is based on, and as sexual in nature for one sexual pole it represents a manifested hole that can only be filled with phallic jouissance and for the other sexual pole it represents a gap.²⁶² Lacan undoubtedly addresses the fact the women are often time seen through their role of a mother only, just like in the case of the Neo-Freudian debate, but it seems that he also does not manage to escape this discourse.

The arising issue is that of woman's jouissance that Lacan believes is supported somewhere else. Woman's jouissance is founded on an enhancement of being not-whole as "...there is always something in her that escapes discourse."²⁶³ More specifically, while men are described through their phallic function, we must keep in mind that this function, the function of the father, has its limits due to castration. Women on the other hand, have a choice taking up the phallic side "...or of not being part of it."²⁶⁴ and therefore "Nothing can be said of the woman."²⁶⁵ This brings us back to his sexuation graph, where the masculine is marked with the phallus, castration and conceding to the law, while the feminine is marked with the possibility of having a choice and not being entirely emerged in these.

Described differently, since jouissance is sexually phallic and is therefore unrelated to the Other, it is covered by open sets that constitute finite and compact spaces, and is not related to the body, but to the language.²⁶⁶ Women are not-whole as sexed beings as they manifest a gap, the gap being "...that which causes his desire."²⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it seems that it is not the gap, that causes the desire as the "...woman's sexual organ is not of interest except via the body's jouissance."²⁶⁸ and this places the phallus as "...the conscientious objection made by one of the two sexed beings to the service to be rendered to the other."²⁶⁹ The phallus is yet again at the center of the sexual interchange as it is landed for services. Since only men are described through language, and women are described against men, a woman becomes a negation, a not, and she is therefore placed in fantasy or "...elevated into the place of the Other and made to stand for its truth. Since the place of the Other is also the place of God, this is the ultimate form of mystification..."²⁷⁰ Women are omitted from language and are hence excluded altogether, but this allows them an elevation into the imaginary,

...*The* woman can only be written with the crossed through. There is no such thing as *The* woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing as *The* woman since of her essence...of her essence, she is not all.²⁷¹

Women, therefore, are not placed entirely under the phallic function and therefore they are “...by being constituted as not all...”²⁷² Precisely because of this “...she has, in relation to what the phallic function designates of *jouissance*, a supplementary *jouissance*.”²⁷³ An additional *jouissance* specific only to her. Women embrace *jouissance* and hold on to it,

...this is the whole issue, she has various ways of taking it on, this phallus, and of keeping it for herself. Her being not all in the phallic function does not mean that she is not in it all. She is in it not *not* at all. She is right in.²⁷⁴

Once again we come to the point of the different *jouissance* between the sexes as males and females come from different *jouissance*. More specifically, the phallic *jouissance* must pass through speech and this is unlike the females. Female *jouissance*, according to Lacan is more than a *jouissance* of the body, it is “...*beyond the phallus*.”²⁷⁵ In other words, this *jouissance* specific to women only, “...*jouissance* proper to her and of which she herself may know nothing, except that she experiences it – that much she does know. She knows it of course when it happens.”²⁷⁶ seems to be the ultimate form of *jouissance*.

Ultimately, the question is to know, in whatever it is that constitutes feminine *jouissance* where it is not all taken up by the man – and I would even say that feminine *jouissance* as such is not taken up by him at all – the question is to know where her knowledge is at.²⁷⁷

Lacan wonders of the woman’s possibility in experiencing *jouissance* that is beyond man’s understanding even though she knows nothing of this *jouissance* “...since we’ve been begging them...on our knees to try to tell us about it, well, not a word.”²⁷⁸ In other words, “Regrading feminine sexuality, our colleagues, the lady analysts...haven’t contributed one iota to the question...There must be an internal reason for that, related to the structure of the apparatus of *jouissance*.”²⁷⁹ This *jouissance* is rarely available even to men, but “...There are men who are just as good as women...And who therefore feel just as good...This is what we call a mystic.”²⁸⁰ Furthermore, to understand women “...we might get a glimmer of something about the Other, because this is what the woman has to deal

with.”²⁸¹ Hence, the woman has a special, superior relationship to God as “...her *jouissance* is radically Other that the woman has a relation to God greater than all...”²⁸²

Despite her superiority, in Lacan’s account woman is and remains in ‘service’ of the man, and she is likely the slave that renounces *jouissance* but just because of it manages to stay in it, unlike the man. The woman is the safeguard of the man’s relation to the phallus and in that sense, the unconscious, effectuates her as a symptom, his symptom. In Lacan’s own words “A woman is a symptom.”²⁸³ constituted through our belief or “...that what constitutes the symptom – that something which dallies with the unconscious – is that one believes in it.”²⁸⁴ Hence, the woman exists simply because the man believes in her, or “Anyone who comes to us with a symptom, believes in it.”²⁸⁵ Once again, we evidence women being described by men, through their relation with men, as men see them, slaves, moms, with a single purpose of being focused on the only thing of importance, the phallus. While they serve as voiceless, empty toys that men can fill to their pleasure, the only destiny they can take upon themselves is escapism in mental illness.

Juliet Mitchell

Mitchell's intention is not to enhance "...our understanding of sexuality, or sexual differences for that matter, "...but to map an area where we might begin to chart the transmission of unconscious 'ideas' of sexual difference."²⁸⁶ Hence, in her book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* she claims that both ideology and the unconscious as well as their effects on the sexual differences are linked with patriarchy. In her own words "...prohibition on an incestuous relation with the mother emanates from the position of the father – either the father's name or his utterance of the law."²⁸⁷ Consequently "...the resolution of the castration complex constitutes the meaning of sexual difference. It is this, part of Lacan's return to Freud that my book makes use of."²⁸⁸

According to Mitchell, Freud's thoughts on femininity and feminine sexuality are impossible "...without some grasp of two fundamental theories..."²⁸⁹, those being the unconscious and the meaning of sexuality for humans. "Only in the context of these two basic propositions do his suggestions on the psychological differences between men and women make sense."²⁹⁰ Therefore, "The unconscious that Freud discovered is not a deep, mysterious place...*it is knowable and it is normal.*"²⁹¹ The unconscious contains normal thoughts that are governed by its own laws of transformation and those that can decipher these laws are able to understand it. These 'normal' thoughts are so difficult to accept that they surface to consciousness only sporadically and only when the ego defenses are dormant. According to Mitchell, Freud understood the unconscious processes and its laws, so he was able to probe femininity itself, or rather "...how femininity is lived in the mind."²⁹² In that sense,

Accepting for the moment the assertion that the girl wants a penis, the desire for one is incompatible with actual possibilities. It is therefore repressed into the unconscious, from whence probably on many occasions it emerges transformed. The only legitimate form (or the only form legitimated by culture) is that the idea...is displaced and replaced by the wish for a baby which is entirely compatible with reality.²⁹³

Hence, the wish for a penis will continue to exist in the unconscious while in consciousness it will be transformed into a desire for a baby. “When...the woman actually comes to have a baby, the emotions she feels will also have attached to them the repressed unconscious penis-wish;”²⁹⁴ In this sense the baby will satisfy a deeply-rooted unconscious wish “...and if it is a baby boy the reality offered will give even greater satisfaction as it will coincide still more pertinently with the unrecognized wish.”²⁹⁵ Even though Mitchell claims to interpret Freud from the aspect of patriarchal society, it is very difficult to determine to what extent, if at all, she disagrees with his claims as she offers no criticism or another point of view. Hence, it can be concluded that she supports Freud’s claim that the wish for a child is closely related to penis envy and even more so, that psychologically, the birth of a male child is far more satisfying.

To account for her impressionable reading of Freud, a small detour is needed to evidence her point of view regarding his seduction theory. Just like Freud, Mitchell also dismisses any kind of incest reported by Freud’s many female patients stating “...the whole thing was a fantasy.”²⁹⁶ She does however acknowledge that Freud dismissed the seduction theory only after his own dream of an incest with his daughter. However, she responds to the feminist criticism of Freud’s denial as their...denial of the unconscious.”²⁹⁷ This type of credulous acceptance of Freud’s work and eager dismissal of any Freud-related criticism is featured throughout her book. In consequence, Mitchell believes that Freud was largely misunderstood because he was reading or rather reconstructing “...the history of the person backwards...”²⁹⁸, which subjected him to developmental and not analytical critique.

Freud's discovery of infantile sexuality, and of sexuality as a key factor in mental life, is a perfect example of this difficulty: the person *does* develop and change sexually, but not with ruthless sequential lope and never so that the past is ‘past’; even a person's account of his change is a coherent story of himself...²⁹⁹

Therefore, Mitchell, yet again, finds the fault in his critics rather than the technique Freud is using, not accounting for the possibility that by being reconstructive this technique is in essence erroneous, and based in phantasy rather than reality.

Apart from the unconscious, Freud's "...other major discovery..."³⁰⁰ that of infantile sexuality, according to Mitchell, "...is also essential for an understanding of Freud's arguments about femininity."³⁰¹ He discovered "...that 'normal' sexuality itself assumed its form only as it travelled over a long and tortuous path...and even then only precariously, establishing itself."³⁰² Hence, normality, even in children, is nonexistent as "...in childhood all is diverse or perverse; unification and 'normality' are the effort we must make on our entry into human society."³⁰³ Therefore, Mitchell believes that Freud was a realist since he did not "...idealize the origins with which he was concerned."³⁰⁴ Three important factors led Freud to discover infantile sexuality, amnesia in both children and hysterical patients, transference, and his study of neuroses, but the most important question was "...why would anyone have to forget their childhood desires, if they were 'acceptable'?"³⁰⁵, establishing childhood amnesia as its most important component. In that context it is worth noting that science, at the time Mitchell republished this book, was very clear that infantile amnesia happens due to the lack of neural connections in the infant's brain as well as the underdevelopment of the brain structures involved in memories. Failure to account for this, weakens her argument since she appropriates Freud's claims as 'scientific' and along this route, she further states the following,

It has been often claimed that Freud's understanding of what is sexual is so large as to be too vague and all-inclusive for the demands of scientific precision. In fact, this all-inclusiveness is, on the contrary, a characteristic of analysts who came to disagree with him. For there is nothing general or vague in Freud's theses on sexuality.³⁰⁶

In this sense, Freud's frequent changes in understanding of sexuality are "...imprecisions..."³⁰⁷ as he moved from a chronological explanations towards a theory, or "...a description that tries to break with the developmental implications of his earlier formulations."³⁰⁸ Even more so, "...Like so many of his revolutionary notions it originated as a hunch, was questioned, cross-questioned, modified, found wanting and finally re-established as an essential concept."³⁰⁹ In this sense, as "...the end supersedes the beginnings...these beginnings are the conventions and ideologies which he found

inadequate and which in *apparently* confirming by trying to understand, he overthrew.”³¹⁰ Hence, the fact that Freud regarded all children as boys “...in fact did no harm...”³¹¹ as he later saw this as not being true, visible in one of his last writings, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* from 1938. Therefore, she points that according to Freud, there isn’t an important distinction between the sexes in the pre-Oedipal sexuality, because both males and females are little boys, but the subsequent period “...the Oedipus complex, is so profoundly different for the two sexes that it alters the meaning of what has gone before.”³¹²

The pregenital erotic stages, the finding of the self within narcissism, are sexually undifferentiated, but although they are pre-Oedipal, they take place within the shadow of the Oedipus complex and it is this that casts its mark back over their whole meaning. What we have so far learnt from Freud about infantile sexuality, narcissism and bisexuality has to be seen in the context of this Oedipally determined, pre-Oedipus phase.³¹³

Mitchell summarizes Freud’s early formulations on sexuality as the baby being born fully sexual and its sexuality passing through three stages, the oral, anal, and phallic one. “The initiation of each stage has two characteristics: the deprivation of the self and a new awareness of the other. The self and the other. But also the self *as* the other.”³¹⁴ This statement is a reference to Lacan’s mirror stage and his concept of alienation from oneself as we become increasingly aware of ourselves. The question of the origin of babies follows each stage and the answers change in alignment with the developmental stage. These stages “...are important only within the context of the child’s efforts to find itself...”³¹⁵ and “In doing this, the child does not pass through stages, he tries them on...”³¹⁶ This inevitably brings us to the question of the libido, the life – essential drive that Freud marks as masculine, which Mitchell argues is for the purpose of attributing activity to it, and females can also share in it, hence, “...drive’s aim...can be passive or active...”³¹⁷

In addition, Mitchell, just like Lacan, believes that narcissism is another important component in development, despite the popular belief that psychoanalysis focuses solely on sexual drives. Therefore, “The new-born baby has also to direct its energy to discovering

itself; where auto-eroticism is a physical expression of this preoccupation, 'narcissism is the term given to the all-important wider psychological implications of this moment.'³¹⁸ In a paper on narcissism from 1914, Freud states "...a human being has originally two sexual objects – himself and the woman who nurses him – and in doing so we are postulating a primary narcissism in everyone..." This primary narcissism is the basis for all love relationships as "...the aim and the satisfaction in a narcissistic object-choice is to be loved."³¹⁹ Mitchell reinforces the concept of narcissism further as it can be clearly "...seen in the woman's wish to be loved..."³²⁰ She does not make it clear however why this is a female-related wish. In continuation, she explains that the child shifts from self-satisfaction towards a self-satisfying image, which helps the ego to start differentiating itself from the unconscious, or "...to use Lacan's terminology...the Imaginary relationship of the self to itself..."³²¹ described in his *mirror phase*. In addition, narcissism establishes the foundation for bisexuality, which would be impossible without it.

All of this comes into play in the Oedipus complex as without the Oedipus complex "...none of this...really makes sense."³²² Mitchell traces the Oedipus complex chronologically, pointing to Freud's 'discovery' of the death drive shared in a letter to his friend Fliess from 1897 and even though she qualifies the discovery as premature "...in the sense that he had not yet formulated his theories..."³²³, she sees no issue behind Freud's generalizations extended from his own experiences to the entire human race and she also legitimizes his childhood 'recollection' as a discovery. Mitchell states that by relating the Oedipus complex with the unconscious and recognizing "...its dynamic role in the history of mental development...only this combination ...gives meaning to the Oedipus complex."³²⁴ Hence,

...the Oedipal situation became the 'nuclear complex' of neuroses and a cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory...The Oedipus complex is the nucleus of neuroses, not because of the incest wishes that it reflects but – because of the *repressions* of these.³²⁵

Apart from Freud's own incestuous dream and three questionable case studies, *Rat Man*, *Dora*, and *Little Hans*, another important feature that serves as a proof for this great discovery according to Mitchell is "...the universal feelings of guilt..."³²⁶ Guilt however is not a universal emotion as it is lacking in some specific psychiatric diagnoses, such as personality disorders and in addition no one has investigated the possible universality of guilt.

In addition, Mitchell claims that Freud, after originally claiming that the differences between the sexes emerge in puberty, "He then detected crucial differences within the formation of the Oedipus complex and finally he was left asserting the central importance of the...pre-Oedipality."³²⁷ However, she omits mentioning that it took some 'convincing' from his followers through the now known Neo-Freudian debate for him to acknowledge this. In continuation, she explains that the male takes himself as model of the universe and believes that everything was constructed in his own image. When it comes to females "...one feels as though Freud has neglected to follow through the logic of his own insights and assume that...the girl must likewise take it to be female."³²⁸ And, according to Mitchell this is so because "...at this stage it is clitoral genitality alone that they experience and as the clitoris is homologous and analogous to the penis, they too assume a phallic world."³²⁹ However, Freud does point out various reasons for this occurrence, for example that girls envy the boy's ability to micturate standing, or because his organ is far superior to hers, rather than attributing her phallic assumptions to the clitoris's resemblance to a penis only. Furthermore, Mitchell claims that "In all the passions of the first mother-attachment the little boy and little girl are alike..."³³⁰ but fails to acknowledge the male-like character of these passions, with an active aim, intended to keep the mother for oneself and even have baby with her. She also claims that "Post-Freudian analysts, ...have all too often interpreted...an absolute distinction between men and women for whom indeed, therefore anatomy was the *only* destiny."³³¹ Hence, Mitchell believes that Freud was misunderstood, even though he himself exclaimed "Anatomy is Destiny..."³³²

The discovery of the transitioning Oedipus complex in women, for Mitchell is a discovery of paramount importance. More specifically, the triangular Oedipus situation and

the inherent bisexuality of individuals, help Freud realize the existence “...of the ‘inverted’ or ‘negative’ Oedipus complex...”³³³ but again fails to acknowledge that Freud does not come to this realization on his own but only after his disciples point to this. Even more so, he fails to acknowledge their contribution in his discovery, just like Mitchell. Hence, both the girl and the boy can respond in a two-way manner in the Oedipus situation, being ‘in love’ with the either parent or identifying with either parent. Hence, “At the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, all four possibilities will be represented with a varying degree of strength...”³³⁴ In order for the ‘correct’ choice to happen, an involvement of the super-ego is needed “The new Oedipal identification contains the power of the authoritative father, which is the special characteristic of the superego.”³³⁵ Therefore, “Having finally brought to fruition the concept of the superego, Freud realized that the Oedipus complex was with good reason the cornerstone of psychoanalysis – its overcoming was the single most momentous sign of human culture.”³³⁶

The final “...crucial concept...and his last word in the history of human subjecthood – is ‘castration.’”³³⁷ Mitchell recognizes its modern refutation due to the absence of actual castration threat however she believes that the idea is still present as well as “...the anatomical distinction between the sexes and the cultural law of patriarchy...”³³⁸ According to Mitchell, castration complex, along with bisexuality and the Oedipus complex sets the milieu for “...Freud’s later development of his theories of femininity. It finally marks the psychological distinction between the sexes.”³³⁹ She believes that Freud’s first articulation of the castration complex in 1908 “...explained all there is to know about the difference between the sexes – it defined the girl and made the boy abandon his incestuous wish for the mother.”³⁴⁰ The fact that Freud later reassessed the meaning of castration, according to Mitchell has “...made it more complex.”³⁴¹ Hence, before comparing the fear of castration with the fear of death, and making it central to his theory of psychosexual development, Freud subjected it to “...a number of important vicissitudes.”³⁴² Mitchell believes that Freud reaches the “...crucial notion that castration bears the transmission of culture.”³⁴³ in the case history of Little Hans. To be exact, “...Oedipus complex, then, is not the trinity...mother, father, child – but a relationship between four terms of which the fourth and the determinant one is castration”³⁴⁴ The fear

of castration originates in the superego and “...leads one to identify with the castrating agent...incorporate him into one’s own personality as an internal authority-figure.”³⁴⁵ Mitchell therefore believes that Freud only reformulated his theory of castration rather than changing it as “Anxiety precedes the fear of castration...”³⁴⁶ The first anxiety would be birth and the subsequent ones “...the dark, being alone, a strange instead of familiar person...”³⁴⁷ all focus on an absence. As the caregivers, specifically the mother, tends to all the child’s needs and keeps it alive by tending to these, “The biological separation of the act of birth is replaced and reinterpreted by the psychical relationship with the mother.”³⁴⁸ While the anxiety caused by the absence of the mother does not raise socially unacceptable ideas, “...the incestuous desire for the mother that then arises *does* involve the forbidden. Now, anxiety comes into play to suggest fear of castration if these incestuous ideas are not abandoned.”³⁴⁹ Mitchell does not uncover however how or why does this leap happen and the specificities of how one comes to desire their parent. Nevertheless, once “...symbolic castration is accepted, and the Oedipus complex thus dissolved, the next stage of anxiety must be fear of the superego, which has replaced the threatening father.”³⁵⁰ In all of these anxieties “...it is the castration fear that lies deep at the heart of the resolution of the Oedipus complex...”³⁵¹ Mitchell also clarifies that castration is the link between Oedipus complex and narcissism as “The threat to the phallus is, therefore, the greatest threat to the ego’s narcissism...Fear of castration is thus both pre-Oedipal *and* the cause of the end of the Oedipus complex.”³⁵² It is unclear however, which threat works for the girl as she is already castrated and her vain ego is shattered, hence narcissism does not seem to be a likely outcome for her. The proof for these claims, according to both Freud and Mitchell, are the theory of fetishism as well as the circumcision practices in some people. Hence, Mitchell acknowledges that the “Acceptance of the possibility of castration is the boy’s path to normal manhood.”³⁵³ When it comes to girls,

...the girl realizes she is without the phallus and proceeds to envy it...Made to feel originally deprived, through what seems like a fault in nature, not, like other deprivations, a culturally demanded necessity, the woman bases her future demands on this lack no less than the man denigrates her because of it. She becomes –

through penis envy – envious as though ‘by nature’; she demands privileges and exemptions to compensate for her supposed biological inadequacy.³⁵⁴

In other words, the loss of the penis would present a huge shock to the narcissistic ego and according to Mitchell this allowed Freud a reassessment in the further development of his femininity theory and “...the pre-Oedipal narcissistic stage.”³⁵⁵ It is interesting however that she does not mention the necessitated need to acknowledge the girl’s primary attachment to the mother. Freud finally realizes that despite the knowledge of the dissolution of the Oedipus complex “...The cause of that dissolution...was the danger of castration.”³⁵⁶ And while things are rather clear for boys, when little girls “...accept the applicability of castration to all females...Freud was still a bit confused or confusing as to what happened...”³⁵⁷ In conclusion, “In ‘normal’ women the middle position (that is, fear of object-loss, though, of course, ‘phallicized’ with the entry into the Oedipus complex) seems to have held most sway or been reverted to...”³⁵⁸ Female sexuality is incorporated in this question of womanhood, and it starts with the girl, just like the boy, believing that everyone has a penis and being primarily attached to the mother.

The girl must shift from her mother – attachment to a sexual desire for the father. This interprets what seems to be her biological fate. Having only a clitoris, she can no more physiologically possess her mother than culturally she must ever be allowed to wish to do so...³⁵⁹

The father must become the loved one only out of necessity “...because she is without a phallus. No phallus – no power...”³⁶⁰ The girl enters “...girlhood...”³⁶¹ when she acknowledges her castration. “Accepting castration means not only acknowledging the lack of phallus, but, out of disappointment, abandoning the inferior clitoris as a source of sexual satisfaction.”³⁶² The girl finds herself in a difficult predicament as her self-love is shattered for being ‘faulty’ and her love for her mother is reversed into hate. Hence, she has three possible developmental courses, turning away from womanhood, refusing to abandon her clitoris, or take a passive role and “...transfer her sexual attentions from her mother to her father, she can want first his phallus, and then by the all-important analogy,

his baby...”³⁶³. Only the last course will lead her to ‘true’ womanhood. “This transference from mother to father is the girl’s ‘positive’ Oedipus complex and, as it is the first correct step on her path to womanhood, there is no need for her to leave it.”³⁶⁴ This is so since she does not perceive her mother as a powerful rival and can continue on hating her, “...the girl has nothing to lose.”³⁶⁵ Hence, unlike the boy, the girl can safely continue to exist in this phase. Mitchell claims “...that Freud was able finally to drop his analogous proposition for the two sexes...”³⁶⁶ only after seeing the “...castration in light of the boy’s Oedipus complex...”³⁶⁷ However, yet again, she fails to recognize the crucial role of the Neo-Freudian contributions.

Mitchell supports Freud’s view that one of the prominent marks of femininity is the abandonment of the clitoris in favor of the vagina stating that the clitoris is a reminder “...of the wound to her narcissism...hence the clitoris loses its active connotations.”³⁶⁸ which in turn makes her give up “...her active aims.”³⁶⁹ Therefore, Mitchell concludes “The progress of a lady then involves a transition from the pre-Oedipal dominance of the active clitoris to the pubescent and adult dominance of the vagina to which the re-awakened clitoris conveys its sensitivity.”³⁷⁰ In this context castration is the signal that marks the abandonment of the mother for both sexes, but for girls “...acceptance of ‘castration’ indicates that she should become *like* her mother.”³⁷¹ Therefore “The contradiction of her first love-object for the girl, *which is her Oedipus complex*, never really need be renounced, for that is her feminine destiny.”³⁷² In conclusion, strong superego is unnecessary as “...it is not she who, in a patriarchal culture, ever has the final word.”³⁷³

As the girl needs to find protection in her Oedipus complex, “...a heaven from the castration complex...”³⁷⁴ she will partly remain here forever and she will hence have a less developed superego, along with an inferior sense of morality and justice. Mitchell concludes that this is so due to “The demands of human culture...”³⁷⁵ or

...the little girl always has two love objects, her mother and then her father, the little boy only one. But human culture subjects all, including the primacy of this mother-attachment, to the law of the father in whose name the boy and the girl take up different destinies.³⁷⁶

Since “We have a...patriarchal culture in which the phallus is valorized and women oppressed.”³⁷⁷ Mitchell believes that Freud’s accounts on femininity are only a reflection of his surrounding circumstances. Hence, “...Freud’s account of women comes out pessimistic is not so much an index of his reactionary spirit as of the condition of women.”³⁷⁸ In addition, Mitchell claims that Freud discovered universal psychic laws or “...it is possible to say that the basic structure can be universal, its application varied and specific.”³⁷⁹ including how a woman becomes one in a patriarchal culture. Specifically, “Freud’s search for origins led him to invent the myth of the totem father slain by a gang of jealous brothers who then fairly shared out the women.”³⁸⁰ Hence, women’s defeat “...takes place with the girl’s castration complex and her entry into the resolution of her Oedipus complex – her acceptance of her inferior, feminine place in patriarchal society.”³⁸¹ Hence “The power of women (‘the matriarchy’) is pre-civilization, pre-Oedipal.”³⁸²

Finally, Mitchell encourages us with the following words “Instead of lamenting the specifics of Freud’s milieu, we should rejoice – nothing could be more useful.”³⁸³ for the examination of patriarchy. In essence all Freud’s claims about development are true when it comes to patriarchal societies, and we should accept them without reservations as they can help us investigate the society itself. Her firm support of Freud’s views in terms of the all-encompassing generalizations, “...Oedipus complex is universal...”³⁸⁴ leads her to conclude that this is the reason why “...ideology persists through changing cultures...”³⁸⁵ and “...why women are everywhere within civilization the second sex, but everywhere differently so.”³⁸⁶ Unfortunately she fails to see her role in helping ideologies like psychoanalysis, persist and remain.

Luce Irigaray

Irigaray is the final reviewed psychoanalyst whose understanding of female sexuality, along with her criticism of Freud and Lacan, will be examined through her two key texts, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Throughout, she searches for logical fallacies and criticizes both Freud and Lacan to the point of mockery.

Set between – at least – two, or two half, men. A hinge bending according to their exchanges. A reserve supply of *negativity* sustaining the articulation of their moves, or refusals to move, in a partly fictional progress toward the mastery of power. Of knowledge. In which she will have no part. Off-stage, off-side, beyond representation, beyond selfhood.³⁸⁷

Women represent pivots serving at the pleasure of men, as they are exchange goods and are reduced to nothingness. Women are a zero, to rephrase Lacan, and are identified and defined only from a masculine position in which they have no say.

Reviewing the female sexual development as proposed by Freud, specifically addressing his assertion that little girls are in essence little boys, since they are active, with clitoris for penis, and with a primary attachment to their mothers, Irigaray points that “... ‘differentiation’ into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same...”³⁸⁸. In other words, since the little girl is a little man, she will become a woman “...minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological...”³⁸⁹ Even more precisely, “A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman.”³⁹⁰ Hence, the arising issue when trying to define a woman from a masculine position is the fact that nothing beyond the masculine is visible and in consequence females are damaged men as castration and lack of penis are representations of nothingness since there is nothing to see. In addition, she wonders about the girl’s penis-envy because Freud states that the little girl’s clitoris acts just like a penis, but all-of-a-sudden the girl must renounce all her pleasure “...in order to procure a-doubtless ambiguous-remedy for man’s castration anxiety.”³⁹¹ as the boy will

find the proof of castration when looking at the girl. So, from a position of perfect happiness with her clitoris, the little girl is struck by the absence of a penis and this has such an enormous influence on her development that she completely represses her sexuality. All of this is needed in order to equalize men and women in their sexual development, or rather reduce women to wannabe men. Therefore, castration

...has to be understood as a definitive prohibition against establishing one own's economy of the desire for origin. Hence, the hole, the lack, the fault, the 'castration' that greets the little girl as she enters as a subject into representative systems."³⁹²

Therefore, the meaning of castration for women is their complete and utter removal from any representation. Hence, Irigaray reduces castration to Freud's essential fear of women and lack of any recognition of their individuality and uniqueness. From this point of view, castration for women basically means that they are represented as masculine, not feminine entities, as they are represented by men, through their gaze, through their fears. Referring to both Freud and Lacan, Irigaray turns our attention to the importance of the gaze in castration, "...at least for Freud, the gaze has always been involved."³⁹³ When it comes to the little girl, there is nothing to see so, "Woman's castration is defined as her having nothing you can see, as her *having* nothing."³⁹⁴ Therefore she concludes that "...the collusion, between *one* sex/organ and the victory won by visual dominance therefore leaves the woman with her sexual void, with an 'actual castration' carried out in actual fact."³⁹⁵ In this context, Irigaray believes that this castrated being presents Freud with difficulties because it is "...graphed along the axes of visibility of (so-called) masculine sexuality."³⁹⁶ and this is the reason why the little girl must immediately assume the role of a little boy. She is simply too visible, vocal, represented and she must "...remain forsaken and abandoned in her lack"...because she needs to "...submit, to follow the dictates issued univocally by the sexual desire, discourse, and law of man."³⁹⁷ Rightfully so, she questions the horror in the little girl originating in her lack when in fact "...it is the boy who looks and is horrified first..."³⁹⁸ Therefore, the girl acts exactly like a little boy but comes out of the castration complex "...feminized by a decision."³⁹⁹ that as a matter of

fact there is something to see, so to pacify male's fears of a definitive destruction. The *nothing* would threaten the phallus – dominated world, or in direct opposition to Lacan,

...that *master signifier* whose law of functioning erases, rejects, denies...the recall of a *heterogeneity* capable of reworking the principle of its authority. That authority is minted in concepts, representations, and formalizations of language which prescribe, even today, the prevailing theory and practice of 'castration'. And what weak instruments these are, products of the very system they pretend to challenge. Such collusion with phallocentrism serves only to confirm its power.⁴⁰⁰

Castration reminds us that the woman is the negative, and man's relationship to this negative is imaginary since the "...*nothing* of sex, the *not* of sex, will be borne by woman."⁴⁰¹ This negative, along with sexuality is being assimilated into a phallus dominion, or "...sex and sexualness being sublated into representations, ideas, laws dominated by the Phallus."⁴⁰² In this exchange, the woman must defeat her drives in order to be able to serve "...as pledge and reward for the 'total reduction of tension'...as 'wife' she will be assigned to maintain coital homeostasis..."⁴⁰³ Even more so, she will be "...the nourishing mother who prolongs the work of death..."⁴⁰⁴ The woman, through her two assigned roles, *mother* and *wife*, will maintain the balance and peace. All of this however,

...doesn't mean that the question of castration isn't raised for woman but rather that it refers back in reality to the father's castration, including the father of psychoanalysis – to his fear, his refusal, his rejection of an *other* sex. For if to castrate woman is to inscribe her in the law of the *same* desire, of *the desire for the same*, what exactly is 'castration'?⁴⁰⁵

Therefore, castration for women becomes meaningless and in addition it will not perpetuate the girl's narcissism, but quite the opposite, it will lead to her "...*total denarcissisation!*"⁴⁰⁶ since the purpose is for her to accept her reality of being without the most important organ. This shatters Freud's claims for this prominent and inseparable feature of femininity which is narcissism.

Girl's path to womanhood during which she needs to change both her object-choice and her sexual organ, means that her solely gained and maintained interest would be seducing the father. Therefore, this path is surely torturous since the girl is "...really and truly seduced by her mother (but no more than is necessary in the interests of good hygiene) and jilted by her father in the name of the law."⁴⁰⁷ The things for the boy are pretty straightforward since as soon as he reaches the phallic stage, he wants to return to the origin or get in the mother, possess her, and "...reproduce..."⁴⁰⁸. However, for the little girl this would be an impossibility due to the lack of penis and the fact that she herself is the origin so, "...she must break any contact with it...and...must get to a place where origin can be repeated...."⁴⁰⁹ However, Freud addresses the girl's relation to the origin "...only as a vacancy, a taking leave of the mother: as rejection, or hatred of the mother."⁴¹⁰, which is a developmental framework supported by Lacan as well. Hence, the girl is "...left with a *void*, a *lack* of all representation...."⁴¹¹ Even more so, "In lieu of the girl's own relation to the place of origin, Freud substitutes the penis, or rather he imposes the penis as the only possible and desirable replacement. The penis – or better still the phallus!"⁴¹² Since the girl has her story "...dictated to her: by the man – father."⁴¹³ In this respect female libido is 'non-existent' as there is no one to represent its meaning. "Female libido...is in effect excluded. The phallus, quite to the contrary, functions all too often in psychoanalysis as the guarantee of sense..."⁴¹⁴

When Freud solves this problem by insisting that femininity is characterized by 'penis-envy', he is obviously defending his male point of view and his wish to perpetuate sexual homogeneity: a non-sex-organ, a castrated sex/organ, or 'penis-envy', does not constitute a sexual heterogeneity but rather represents a type of negativity that sustains and confirms the homogeneity of masculine desire.⁴¹⁵

Once again, Irigaray shows that women and femininity are only represented through a male point of view and in that sense they embody nothing more than uniformity with males. This depiction does not lead to an explanation of the sexual differences or how they come into being. The girl's only goal towards feminine development is "...the sex organ that seems to hold the monopoly on sexual use as well as the power to determine the value of sexual

exchange.”⁴¹⁶ In doing so, she will also sustain the value of the phallus for the man so he “...can be busy with other investments...as making laws...”⁴¹⁷ and in that sense even being superior when it comes to his super-ego. This “...phallic imperialism...”⁴¹⁸ ‘creates’ a woman that is suggestible and hysterical due to being “...controlled by a master-signifier, the Phallus, and by its representative(s).”⁴¹⁹

In this perspective we might suspect the phallus (Phallus) of being the *contemporary figure of a god jealous of his prerogatives*; we might suspect it of claiming...to be the ultimate meaning of all discourse, the standard of truth and propriety...the signifier and/or the ultimate signified of all desire...as emblem and agent of the patriarchal system, to shore up the name of the father (Father).⁴²⁰

The illustration of women as mothers is nothing less problematic and Irigaray wonders about the responsibilities they are ‘tasked’ with, one prominent example being her involvement and sole responsibility in both awakening and suppressing the sexuality in her children. This is most striking in the case of the little girl, as according to Freud, it is the mother who arouses the sexual feelings in her, while “The father...cannot be the seducer...The father does not seduce or capture or repress his daughter’s sexuality.”⁴²¹ His importance is but minor even as a castrating mediator so Irigaray refers to his role, according to Freud, as a “...dim, secondary, even ‘passive’...”⁴²² In addition, Freud’s late acknowledgment of the longer-than suspected duration of the attachment between the girl and her mother and hence the importance of the pre-Oedipal attachment for the little girl, leads him to only attribute hysteria and paranoia to this attachment. To this end, she refers to the male psychosexual development, wondering if the man remains fixated on his first object-choice, his mother, making his female partner correspondingly his mother. This means that the woman must give up her first object-choice to conform to the man’s. Even more so, “...woman’s only relation to the origin is one dictated by man’s...She leaves her family, her “house”, her name...her family tree, in favor of her husband’s”⁴²³ Further to this end, the penis/phallus comes into play yet again since the main performance is between the man and his mother. From this standpoint “...woman is well and truly castrated...”⁴²⁴ but the woman is also very powerful despite her penis envy and/or castration complex as

she will eventually set the stage for everything to be played out, from seducing her children and soon after forbidding any arisen sexuality to determining their partner-choices and indirectly governing her children's lives. In addition, femininity diminishes because of maternity, and the hope for a baby-boy that "...appears merely to be a *penis-product and penis-substitute*.⁴²⁵ However, to allot the woman with maternity only, would be troubling as

Man would have to want more than to find his mother again and reproduce himself. More even than to provide her with the phallus that he will be also, in the person of his son. Man would have to be not too horrified and disgusted by his wife, his mother, as a 'castrated' creature.⁴²⁶

Hence, Irigaray also questions the masculine psychosexual development as well since rightfully so, it seems that it is reduced to recreating his mother in his wife in order to procreate with his mother. So, the behavior that will 'guarantee' a happy marital life is if she 'becomes' her mother-in-law and adopts her husband as a son. If woman wishes to attract man, she must identify herself with his mother. This act is required of her. And the castrating will result from the amputation of the whole of her earlier economy. Which will stand in for the, *female*, castration complex.⁴²⁷ Therefore, "...woman is...satisfied and proud to be inscribed in, and to perpetuate the family tree of her father-husband."⁴²⁸ In addition, her "...rebellions are never aimed at the paternal function – which is sacred and divine – but at that powerful and then castrated mother, because she has brought a castrated child into the world."⁴²⁹ This pinpoints another issue with Freud's understanding of femininity, the issue of dominant mother that is also not so due to being castrated herself. In addition, keeping in mind that according to Freud, only the birth of a son will bring the ultimate happiness for the mother and in consequence stability to the whole family system, Irigaray argues that it is exactly the son that brings the woman/mother into the Oedipus situation. "She is finally oedipized by the son's desire. For his mother. Finally she is desired unequivocally. By her son...The family is held together by the desire of Oedipus. Father and son."⁴³⁰

While the mother is the alpha and omega when it comes to the psychosexual development, the influence of the father is benevolent, since it would be too perilous "...to admit that the father might be a seducer, and even that he might want to have a daughter *in order to seduce.*"⁴³¹ However, instead of seducing, the father

*...lays down a law that prohibits him from doing so...if for him the law guarantees an increment of pleasure, and power, it would be good to uncover what this implies about his desire – he seems to get more sexual satisfaction from making laws than love...*⁴³²

Irigaray ascertains that this representation of women, as being castrated, envious for the penis, full of hate for their mothers, is simply a mirror image, a self-representation. "They are signs of specular process/trial which favors a *flat mirror* as most apt to capture the image..."⁴³³ In other word, "Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters."⁴³⁴, or what she names as "...phallocratic order."⁴³⁵ In this context, the woman "...is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of male phantasies."⁴³⁶ In this sense psychoanalysis takes up "A discourse that tells the truth about the logic of truth: namely that *the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects.*"⁴³⁷ Hence, this is a phallic model with penis envy as the sole motivator behind, or a "...desire to appropriate for oneself the genital organ that has a cultural monopoly on value."⁴³⁸ As women do not own such a prized possession, their single motivator in life is to find a substitute for it. This reaches its peak when "...the truth about female sexuality is restated even more rigorously when psychoanalysis takes *discourse itself* as the object of its investigation."⁴³⁹ directly addressing Lacan. The result of his investigations, according to Irigaray, is the complete exclusion of women from words and the nature of things altogether. One of the exceptionally problematic issues is that this is raised to a level of a law, albeit a circular one, as they are being excluded based on men's laws as the problematic reality is being "...justified by a logic that has already ordered reality as such."⁴⁴⁰ Rightfully so, she states "What is disturbing is that of these fantasies he makes laws, going so far as to confuse them with science..."⁴⁴¹ Hence, women do not exist even though the language to name them does, and the only aspect that she can threaten is

in prediscursive reality. In this logic, women cannot articulate anything, nor can they be heard, but this is not a question Lacan raises since the existence of another logic might upset his own. Comparing his logic with ejaculation, Irigaray states “The production of ejaculation of all sorts, often prematurely emitted, makes him miss...”⁴⁴² While women are not allowed even an unconscious without the man granting it, there is one thing that she is allowed, and that is “...a privileged relationship with ‘God’ – meaning, with phallic circulation.”⁴⁴³ Hence, female enjoyment is reduced to rule and the non-material “...but always according to him – essentially an-archic and a-teleological.”⁴⁴⁴, something that is forced and obligatory and according to psychoanalysis “...without desire.”⁴⁴⁵ Hence, Irigaray concludes that “If there is a such a thing – still – as feminine pleasure, then, it is because men need it in order to maintain themselves in their own existence. It is *useful* to them...”⁴⁴⁶ However, as Lacan states that women cannot say anything about their pleasure, she concludes that “...they confess the limit of their own knowledge.”⁴⁴⁷ Irigaray also tackles his statements of motherhood, or that woman comes into the sexual relationships only as a mother, or “...anatomy is reintroduced here in the form of the necessary production of the child.”⁴⁴⁸ She believes that this is inscribed in the entire philosophical tradition and presents a notion that in the patriarchal domain women are only perceived as mothers and this determines their worth. Referring to Lacan’s view that the only remaining pleasure would be the pleasure of speaking, Irigaray points to the inevitable conclusion that “...pleasure could never be found in a relation. Except in the relation to the same. The narcissistic pleasure that the master, believing himself to be unique, confuses with the One.”⁴⁴⁹ So, pleasure and love would only be found in speaking to oneself about oneself.

Consequently, when it comes to psychoanalysis and its representatives like Freud, Lacan, and Mitchell, Irigaray concludes that “...there are many areas in which this theory merits questioning, in which self-examination would be in order. One of these areas is female sexuality.”⁴⁵⁰

Conclusion

The investigated concepts of penis envy and castration complex that played a pivotal role in the XX century in explaining female sexuality, are practically non-existent in the XXI century. It is very difficult finding any topic-related discussion even in modern psychoanalytic literature, but modern philosophy as well. In psychology with the great shift towards scientific investigations and scientific explanations of phenomena in the 1980s, Freud is hardly studied. In philosophy it seems that feminist critique through Jessica Benjamin, or Nancy Chodorow, strongest during the 1980s, overused Freud to explain mainly patriarchal structured societies. Hence, current writings do not contribute new findings or thinking but rather rearticulate and reanalyze what has been already articulated and analyzed many times before. Hence, penis envy and castration complex as explanations for feminine psychosexual development seems to have outlived their usefulness.

Freud starts describing Oedipus complex, genital zones, masculine libido, the importance of the clitoris, and the clitoris – vagina shift in his letters to his close friend at the time Fliess, specifically in 1897. In other words, he specifically discusses these before he invents or starts using psychoanalysis, in 1900. However, in 1925 he claims that their discovery is exactly a psychoanalytic one, so it comes as no surprise that he needs to subject his theory of sexual development, and specifically feminine development, to frequent changes to fit them however it suits him most.

In 1905 Freud postulates the psychosexual development, detailing the psychosexual organization, identical development in both males and females, male attribution of penis to everyone as well as castration complex. However, he finds it important in 1920 to add a footnote to the latter, now stating that both males and females attribute penis to everyone and suffer castration complex. In 1906 he first claims that observations helped him evidence penis envy in boys only, but later he asserts that girls are also envious of the penis. In 1916 Freud establishes Oedipus complex as crucial in the psychosexual development, appearing at the age of three when a sensual object choice is first made, and affirms the equal psychosexual development in both boys and girls.

Hence, the debate between his disciples starts with Van Ophuijsen who distinguishes between castration and masculinity complexes and ascribes the latter to most women, indirectly denying castration as developmentally essential. In addition, he also states that masculinity complex originates in the oral phase, during the primary attachment to the mother, something that Freud fails to consider at the time. In 1920 Starcke expands on the origin of the castration complex, more specifically on the importance of nursing and the oral phase in its creation. In the same year Abraham claims to doubt the primacy of the phallus but considers it a secondary creation, just like the castration complex. In addition, he reaffirms the positioning of the penis envy to an oral fixation, in a way supporting both Van Ophuijsen and Starcke. This provokes Freud's to address the psychosexual development further in 1923 and 1924, claiming now, unlike before, that the genital organization in childhood resembles the adult one to a great extent. In this context, he claims that for both sexes only the penis is of importance. In addition, Freud claims that the dissolution of the Oedipus complex happens due to the fear of castration, which of course cannot include girls as they are already castrated. This, however, does not bother Freud as he also claims that the girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler compared to boys as they accept the castration as accomplished and all that needs to happen is a shift from penis towards a baby. The claims that Freud makes in these papers drive psychoanalytic thinking for the next decade, are the point of many disagreements, even a rift between the psychoanalytic societies of Vienna and London, but nevertheless drive the discussion on female sexuality further and deeper. In this context the next published text is Abraham's key text that actually inspires a heated debate as all of the later contributions refer to this text. He shifts the focus towards object-love claiming it appears before the age of three, in the oral phase, and with that introduces the neglected mother-daughter relationship in the debate. This also hints at the complexity of the Oedipus resolution for the little girl as she needs to shift her object-love from mother to father. The subsequent contributors can loosely speaking be divided in two sides, supporters and opposers of Freud, with Deutsch, Muller-Braunschweig, and De Groot being the former and Horney, Klein, and Jones being the latter. Even his supporters, however, point to some logical inconsistencies in Freud's proposed feminine psychosexual development. For example, Deutsch argues that the girl's psychosexual development is more complex than the boy's and draws the attention to the

importance of motherhood in the overall development; Muller-Braunschweig believes penis envy to be a reaction-formation type of defense against passivity; De Groot wonders how the little girl attaches importance to the penis when she never possessed one. All contributors, with the exception of Horney, are very careful when addressing any point of divergence from Freud and agree of the existence of penis envy. Hence, in their need to explain penis envy they raise important questions about female sexuality, the importance of castration and girl's relationship to the concept of pre-Oedipal mother, that Freud will incorporate later.

The debate forces Freud to recreate his views on femininity and in 1925, 1931 and 1932 he focuses his examinations on the primary attachment of the girl to her mother, which he names pre-Oedipus complex. The shift towards the father as an object-choice as well as the resolution of the Oedipus complex stay in the background, possibly due to his inability to satisfactorily explain them. Nevertheless, he is still convinced in the importance of penis envy, which will be substituted with a wish for a baby, and in the importance of castration complex, ascertaining it to be of pivotal importance for the girl's detachment from her mother. Freud now acknowledges the lack of symmetry between the sexes, the girl abandons her pre-Oedipal attachment due to castration anxiety and unwillingly enters the Oedipus attachment due to her penis wish that is to be substituted with a baby wish. In essence, the girl starts off from a masculine position in the pre-Oedipal attachment, and shifts towards a feminine position in the Oedipal phase. Castration complex prepares the girl for the Oedipus complex, and after entering it, the absence of castration fears, the main motive to abandon Oedipus is gone, which in turn makes the girl inferior. All these are argued points in the debate, and the manage to shift the discussion towards how things are achieved, rather than why are they emerging. Hence, the debate manages to shift the focus from the distinction between sexes towards determinants of femininity/masculinity, that in turn urges Freud to ascertain yet again, that the libido is masculine.

After the second world war, Lacan refocuses philosophical attention to the issue of femininity, reinterpreting Freud with the help of linguistics. More specifically, he emphasizes the importance of language in constituting and hence explaining penis envy,

castration complex and femininity. Lacan firmly supports Freud and deepens his interpretations through the contexts of the imaginary and symbolic, admiring his postulates but at the same time remarking him as being too understandable and hence easily exposed to criticism, which in turn he remedies. As Lacan's unconscious is structured like a language, it is therefore placed in the symbolic and along with the phallus and castration complex it plays a pivotal role in understanding human sexuality. However, everything revolves around the phallus, the master signifier, that Lacan claims is not the organ even though at times he acknowledges it exactly as such describing it and its choice with being most visible especially when stiff. The importance of the phallus is seen through the psychosexual development, specifically in the child's realization that the phallus represents a lack that he cannot make-up for the mother. Castration complex originates in the understanding that mother does not have the phallus but wants one, nonetheless and the child cannot provide it. Oedipus complex itself means that both father is preferred by the mother and at the same time he prohibits her. The law of the father plays a pivotal role in breaking the mother-child dyad, so Lacan shifts the importance from the mother towards the father. The girl's Oedipus complex is simplified thanks to the fact that when the prohibition of the mother happens, she knows where to find the phallus. In addition, he introduces jouissance to describe the pleasure beyond pleasure, and claims its foundation to be narcissism. While men can only take up phallic jouissance, which in turn must pass through speech, women can choose a supplementary jouissance specific only to them, that they do not know how to describe but do know it. Hence, women are superior and closer to god as their jouissance is beyond the phallus. Yet, despite having the choice of not taking the phallic function, women are completely involved with the phallus, being right in it. For both men and women, the ultimate interest lies not in the female sexual organ but the phallus. Hence, in Lacan's depiction of women, they are omitted from language and representation, are an absence and a lack and it seems they exist simply because men believe in their existence, just like the symptom they are.

Mitchell tries to display Freud's views as a product of a patriarchal society and in that sense feels urged to reinterpret his views without doubting their truthfulness. In that context, she claims that Freud's views represent how femininity is lived in the mind and states that

his critics are in denial of their own unconscious. To that end, she fully supports his dismissal of the seduction theory as a fantasy, since men cannot be seducers. In addition, she claims that the unconscious is both normal and knowable, while at the same time, childhood is perverse. As to Freud's claim that girls are little boys, she states that no harm was done as he retracted this position, but it is unclear as to when exactly he did this, as in his final writings he still states this to be true until the age of three. In addition, she credits Freud exclusively with the discovery of pre-Oedipality, while she considers the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, which has still not been clarified when it comes to girls, as the cornerstone of psychoanalysis. Penis envy is present and necessary for the girl to turn towards her father, towards the power represented with the phallus. This also determines the turning away from the mother as she is phallus-less and hence powerless. Castration, however, seems to be even more important, as it represents the transmission of culture, that is of course, transmitted only through males. Thus, thanks to Freud who according to Mitchell discovered universal psychic laws we can evidence the oppression of women in patriarchy. As Oedipus complex is also universal, across cultures and times, this oppressive ideology has and will persist.

Irigaray is the only one, apart from Horney, that unforgivingly criticizes both Freud and Lacan and their representation of women and femininity. In that respect she finds logical inconsistencies in their claims and elevates them to ridicule. Hence, she claims that such representation arises due to the fact that women are represented from a masculine position and hence reduced to a zero, as women are simply reduced to men minus a possibility to be represented as such. As women are seen through men's eyes, they are depicted through their fears as well, and castration in essence means nothing to see. Hence, women have to be represented in this way in order not to threaten the phallus and its dominance, and to continue to serve at the pleasure of men. In this respect, Oedipus complex in essence represents the girl's interest in seducing her father and castration complex will remove the girl's narcissism completely and is therefore redundant. Penis envy, according to Irigaray, represents the male's wish for sexual homogeneity, which marks the male's desire. Hence, the only goal of the little girl is to retain the phallus while in the process she needs to loose her origin by not just turning away from her mother but submerging herself into hatred of

that same origin that she will perpetuate in the future. In this sense, the focus on motherhood is also problematic as throughout history women are valued solely and exclusively for this role. Hence, Irigaray concludes that this representation of women as castrated, envious for the penis, and full of hate towards their mothers is nothing more but Freud's and Lacan's self-representation for whom nothing beyond the masculine seems to be visible. In addition, such a representation is also very useful since it preserves women as objects of exchange.

Invented by Freud and reinterpreted by many influential thinkers, penis envy and castration complex and their role in the overall feminine psychosexual development undoubtedly played a very important part in the raise of the feminist thought. However, in the twenty-first century, they seem forgotten, almost extinguished and are likely to remain only in the history of psychology and philosophy, where they belong as unfounded ascertains that have been conceived in the questionably sound mind of a man.

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