



## FRATERNAL INCEST IN THE PROPOSITIONS FOR AN EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN MARIE BONAPARTE



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### ABSTRACT

The objective of the present work is to analyze Bonaparte's arguments in two clinical vignettes of fraternal incest in the light of his propositions of educational reform in the 1930s. In order to achieve this purpose, we anchored our methodology in the Laplanchean method of making psychoanalytic texts work, pouring from them the radical decentralization of the subject through the affirmation of the priority of the other and the sexual in the psychic constitution. For Bonaparte, episodes of fraternal incest have two outcomes for the psychosexual development, especially of the girl: one beneficial (algebra of seduction) and the other disastrous (algebra of abuse). Our results show that the Bonapartean theory of infantile prophylaxis of neuroses embraces the possibility of incest between siblings in a less traumatic and even beneficial way.

**Keywords:** Bonaparte, Education, Incest, Brethren, Psychoanalysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Fraternal incest is a social phenomenon that undergoes strong social repression in most Western societies (MALINOWSKI, 2013). Unlike incest between an adult and a child, fraternal incest usually occurs between couples of the same age or at close ages. Is fraternal incest always evil? How can incest be beneficial? What is the relationship between Bonaparte's 1930 educational reform and the theme of Fraternal incest? Our study seeks to answer these questions.

For Bonaparte, fraternal incest would result in two outcomes: one beneficial for the psychosexual development of the girl who, as a woman (adult), due to learning in the incestuous episode, will have excellent sexual performance, without any dysfunction and trauma; and in another outcome, the result will be disastrous, as a result not of incest itself, but of the rigid moral education to which the girl is subjected. The problematization of the normative pedagogical crossings that permeate the norms imposed for genders and especially female sexuality in the 1930s will be the focus of Bonaparte's attention.

This work will be developed as follows: in the first section we will explain the clinical vignettes of fraternal incest. In the second section, we contextualize his proposal for educational reform having as a motivating argument the prophylaxis of infantile neuroses. In the third section we expose the theory of generalized seduction and aspects of repression by adults (parents or educators) when the incestuous fraternal relationship is discovered.

## METHODOLOGY (MATERIALS AND METHODS)

Presentation of two clinical vignettes of fraternal incest, they are:

First case: Bonaparte (1967) explains a situation of incest, in a girl of ten to twelve years of age who is seduced by an older brother, who was eighteen years old at the time. This fact, even after her childhood, did not prevent her from continuing to admire her brother, despite family sanctions and the fact that her father had solemnly warned her that this was very terrible. At the time of the incest episodes, the girl was involved in normal intercourse. The child soon had reactions of absolutely normal erotic satisfactions. About a year later, the incestuous relationships were discovered by the parents, and then the young people were separated and the brother was sent away. The girl, during the whole course of the brotherly passion, did not have the impression that he had done anything wrong, even after the family condemnations. When the girl became a woman and married years later, she had with her husband a normal erotic clitorid-vaginal function, allowing her satisfaction



in intercourse. The lessons of the initiating brother were not lost and the early seduction was not disastrous (BONAPARTE, 1967, p. 188).

Second case: a case of seduction of two girls, one being the daughter of bourgeois who inhabited the first floor of a large mansion, and the other girl, the daughter of proletarians who live in the same mansion, but on the upper floor, in the *rez-de-chaussée* (as the Parisians say in the *concierge*). The girl on the first floor was subjected to a careful, moral and severe education that made her a virtuous girl. The girl of the *rez-de-chaussée* was left free, ran through the streets and lived in the company of several children and adults. The young bourgeois woman on the first floor, on the contrary, far from having experienced the sexual games of childhood as an initiation, she was surrounded by interdictions and, therefore, she began to condemn sexuality in depth. She refused to marry, but was forced by her family, becoming a frigid, dissatisfied and neurotic wife. She never had children. While the other had a normal sex life.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the first decades of the twentieth century, many of the beliefs of the nineteenth century were still in force, such as that "masturbation is the cause of a series of physical and mental disturbances. [...] it leads to reduced intelligence, nocturnal hallucinations, and suicidal and homicidal tendencies. In schools, methods are invented to keep children's hands away from the genitals" (SEIXAS, 1998, p.74). Masturbation was considered the prototype of sin, from which every feeling of guilt must be expected. The masturbator was a kind of monster, the fight against the onanist and the surveillance of infantile sexuality unfolded in all parts of society (FOUCAULT, 1975). The threats of educators and the weight of repression of sexuality were very violent in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In this field, psychoanalysis emerged as a treatment or prophylaxis of neurosis. The pressure of educators on the child is intended to curb desires, placing other goals as purposes of sublimation in social, artistic or intellectual objectives. Educators were more likely to believe in being able to warn youth of the dangers of sexuality. Thus, they absolutely condemned all sexual instruction for children, placing them in the aura of virtue and chastity. And in this sense, masturbation was the greatest evil to be repressed, however, we learn from Bonaparte's text that one of the premises of his educational reform is precisely the opposite, that is, "to free the sexual drive, which constitutes a part of the heritage of humanity" (BONAPARTE, 1951/1930, p. 163), removing it from warnings and restrictions of a negative order.



The author distinguishes three major types of agents of seduction: maternal seduction, seduction by adults and seduction by peers. Briefly, we have the following understanding: maternal seduction is related to the care of the baby's hygiene and is of an involuntary or unconscious nature. In the care of *Toilette* Caresses are essential providers of sexual excitements in the child, as he is "washed, cleaned, caressed." (BONAPARTE, 1967/1949, p. 117). Seduction by adults, on the other hand, is that seduction considered sexual seduction itself, of an intentional nature, which causes direct excitement of the child's body parts, usually provoked by pedophile or perverse adults. In the manifestation of seduction by peers, the Bonapartean postulates refer to sexual games between children or between siblings of the same age or close ages, generally children imitate the sexual games of adults and masturbate multituously or evolve to complete coitus. In short, for Bonapartean thought, infantile sexuality resides in the articulation of three preparatory phenomena: seduction, masturbation, and Oedipal reveries. And it will be parallel to the theme of seduction that the author restores the image of masturbation that was then stigmatized by the educators of her time.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sadism of educators is the crucial point in Bonaparte's educational reform, because it is precisely "an occasion where the sadism of educators should never be exercised: it is in the repression of child masturbation" (BONAPARTE, 1951/1930, p. 165). This is an extremely innovative postulate, because at that time there was a strong intimidation against masturbation. The arguments of Mary Bonaparte (1951/1930) indicate that this brutal prohibition brutally suffocated sexuality in its full flowering, the consequences of which range from a neurosis, through rebellious onanists, to the preservation in adulthood of excessive fixations on a perverse mode of libidinal satisfaction of sexuality, such as extreme cases of sadism and masochism. And the cases become more serious clinically when these threats and interdictions, usually generating a lot of anguish (BONAPARTE, 1952b), occur in the second period of infantile masturbation, the one where the act of masturbating is accompanied by unconscious and preconscious fantasies recurrent in the Oedipal phase (FREUD, 1976a/1924). In this way, a less repressive education of infantile sexuality would function, from Bonaparte's point of view, as a prophylaxis for infantile neuroses.

On the other hand, the clinic of child and adolescent sexual violence finds the need for an expanded clinic, considering its multidimensionality (FRANÇA; TANNURE; RABELO, 2018). Sexual abuse involves the silencing of care figures in the intrafamily context, whose



traumatic character can be accentuated when the child's and/or adolescent's speech is not validated by them. Brotherly incest can be interpreted in different ways depending on the family culture. The non-exercise of the maternal function in situations of child and adolescent vulnerability to the mothers' listening and support, in order to identify their emotional weaknesses in the exercise of motherhood, linked to the devitalization of care relationships, represented by the metaphor of the 'dead mother' psychically in the eyes of the child (FRANÇA; TANNURE; RABELO, 2018). Internalized precarious parental care determines the channeling of the child's instinctual demands and desires in the face of psychic reality. The incestuous fraternal relationship between children is called the 'Hansel and Gretel syndrome', which brings with it abandonment and child helplessness. The strengthening of the bonds between them in the face of the confrontation of neglected emotional needs can lead to an absence of bodily restrictions (FRANÇA *et. al.* 2017; 2014). The fragility in the face of parental figures can be mitigated in the sexual investment in the brother chosen by them to receive the libidinal investment.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bonaparte's educational reform allows us to understand the repression of sexuality far beyond its traditional meaning, pointing out its harmful effects. We are what we are because we have inherited all the indelible marks of the relationship with our parents, educators or even deflorators. Foucault (1988), long after Marie Bonaparte, came to show us that sex and the truth about sexuality play a decisive role in the reproduction of the class structure of capitalist society.

We conclude this article by stating that a look at the Bonapartean text of the educational reform broadened and, at the same time, modified what we commonly understand about fraternal incest. And the same can be the result of an algebra of abuse or seduction, bringing harm or benefits. The processes of repression of sexuality are like a productive network that permeates the whole of society, going beyond a negative instance that aims only to punish.



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