



HAL
open science

Drifting across the Black Hole: From Prison to the "Recours à l'Acte"

Apolline Carne, Mila Signorelli, Thamy Ayouch

► **To cite this version:**

Apolline Carne, Mila Signorelli, Thamy Ayouch. Drifting across the Black Hole: From Prison to the "Recours à l'Acte". *Recherches en psychanalyse*, 2021, Body Detention: Psychic and Political Issues, 31 (1), pp.85-105. 10.3917/rep2.031.0087 . hal-03789914

HAL Id: hal-03789914

<https://hal.science/hal-03789914v1>

Submitted on 27 Sep 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Drifting across the Black Hole: From Prison to the “Recours à l’Acte”

Apolline CARNE

*Clinical Psychologist and Psychomotrician. Teaching Contract PhD Student at ED 450, C.R.P.M.S., University of Paris. U.S.M.P. of the Villepinte prison, C.H.I. Robert Ballanger. Université de Paris – UFR IHSS – Bâtiment Olympe de Gouges
8, rue Albert Einstein – 75013 Paris – France
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4006-4888>
apolline.carne@laposte.net*

Translated into English by Mila Signorelli & Thamy AYOUC

Apolline Carne, Translated into English by Mila Signorelli, and Thamy Ayouch, «Drifting across the Black Hole: From Prison to the “Recours à l’Acte”», *Research in Psychoanalysis* 2021/1 (No 31) , p.85-102

Abstract :

The body plays a particular role in prison and in the “recours à l’acte”. An object of sociological, phenomenological and psychoanalytic theorizations, it also stands at the centre of the subject’s history. The prison world reverberates the subject’s history and their “recours à l’acte”, and modifies their relationship to time, space, and their body. The bodily space-time of the incarcerated subject can warp into a black hole, echoing deep-rooted experiences that mobilise the bodily ego, and confronting them to early trauma. The subject may then develop psychic survival mechanisms through the “recours à l’acte” or during prison time. Weaving together clinical experience and theory, psychoanalysis and phenomenology, I shall question the psychic processes at play for an incarcerated subject, Julien, to highlight the way he drifts across a black hole during his prison time and through his “recours à l’acte”.

Keywords : “recours à l’acte”, prison environment, body, black hole, psychic survival

Résumé :

Le corps occupe une place particulière dans le milieu carcéral et dans le recours à l’acte. Objet de théorisations sociologiques, phénoménologiques et psychanalytiques, il est aussi au cœur de l’histoire du sujet. L’univers carcéral résonne avec l’histoire du sujet et son recours à l’acte, et modifie son rapport au temps, à l’espace, et à son corps. L’espace-temps corporel du sujet détenu peut alors se déformer jusqu’au trou noir, et faire écho à des vécus archaïques mettant en jeu le moi corporel et renvoyant à des traumatismes du tout début de la vie. Le sujet peut alors développer des mécanismes de survie psychique, lors du recours à l’acte et au cours de l’incarcération. Dans une articulation entre clinique et théorie, et entre psychanalyse et phénoménologie, j’interrogerai les processus psychiques en jeu chez un sujet détenu, Julien, pour mettre en lumière la traversée du trou noir au cours de l’incarcération et du recours à l’acte.

Mots clefs : recours à l’acte, milieu carcéral, corps, trou noir, survie psychique

*You have to have chaos in you to give birth to a dancing star.
Friedrich Nietzsche (1883-1885). Thus spoke Zarathustra.
A book for everyone and for no one.*

A prisoner’s body may be granted an important role in history and society. Punishment, originally a source of physical torment, is now more centred on the soul. The ideology of an “unbodily” punishment, to use M. Foucault’s expression, (1975, p. 23) remains caught in a “political economy” of the body, the consistent object of punishment in a system of constraints, deprivations, obligations and prohibitions. The body is the object of political power and knowledge. In prison, bodies are deprived of freedom. Prison is also a dark place where a subject finds themselves “in the hole”, to use a colloquial expression that is to say “in jail”. Let us mention, incidentally, that British war prisoners were held in the “Black Hole,” a room in Fort William in Calcutta, India, in 1756.

This historical event could be linked to the “black hole” experienced by some inmates. As a matter of fact, some patients felt they fell in a black hole both during their prison time and with the extremely violent act that led them to jail. C. Balier was the first psychoanalyst and psychiatrist to work in prisons. He devised the “recours à l’acte”¹ (2005) to metapsychologically define extreme violence, in particular in penal crimes. The “recours à l’acte” may then be linked to the notion of “black hole” I suggest in this article. In astrophysics, a black hole corresponds to the death of a gravitational force (such as a star), which distorts the surrounding space-time sucking it in. Since a subject constitutes their body within a particular space-time, it could be surmised that a black hole disrupts their relation to their body proper – *my body is mine*. How can a subject drift across a black hole during their prison time and when resorting to the “recours à l’acte”?

Analysing Julien’s clinical situation and using psychoanalysis and phenomenology concepts, I shall tackle the role of the black hole and the body in prison environment and in the “recours à l’acte”. I shall first examine the black hole experience in prison environment and through the “recours à l’acte”. I shall then question the origin of the black hole and the links between both situations.

In Jail, Falling into the Black Hole

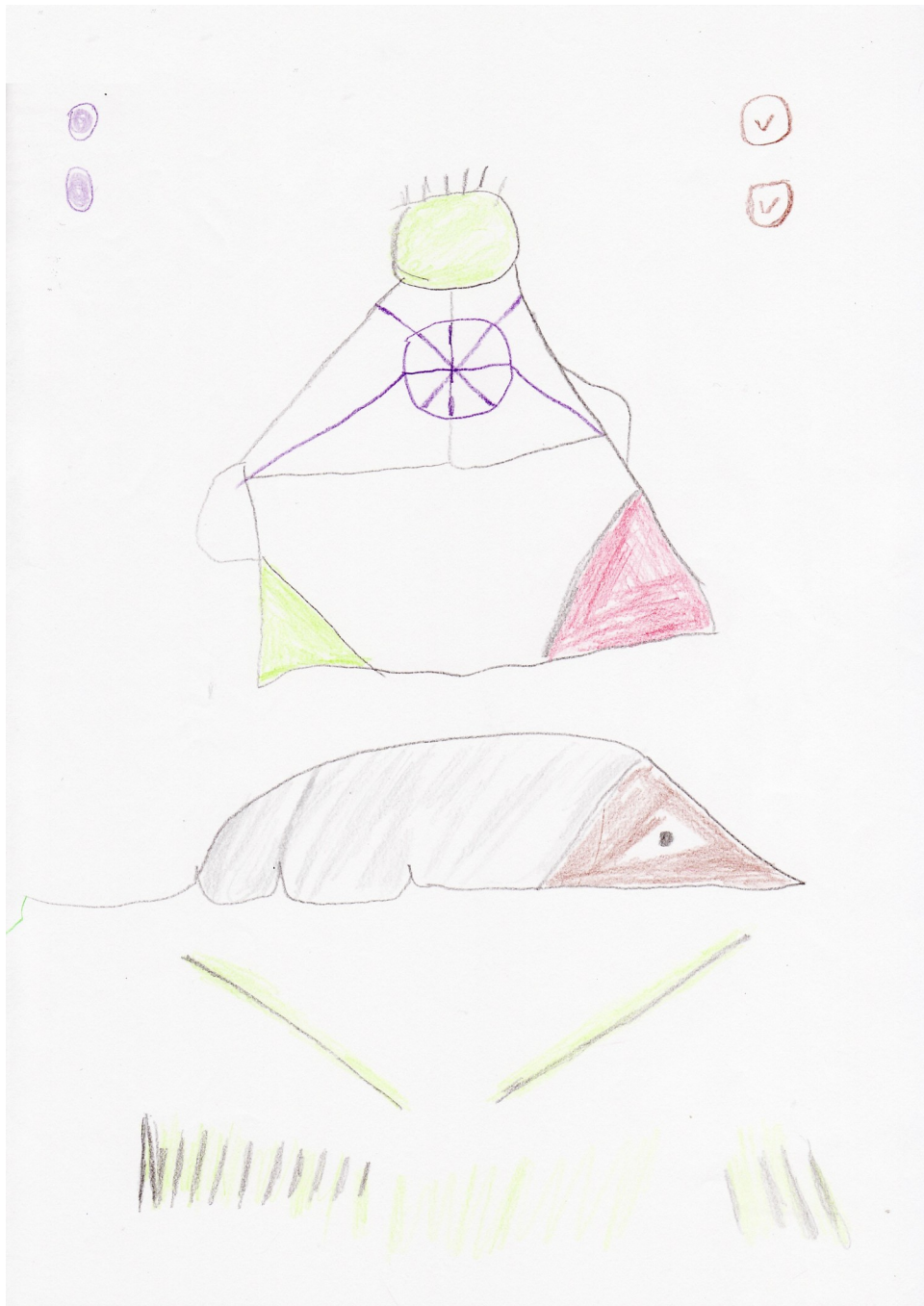
Julien had been incarcerated for several months when I attended him in a psychotherapeutic session, in the prison’s health unit. At the time we first met, the sufferance he expressed manifested physically. He had been incarcerated for more than one year for “domestic violence and attempted murder” on his wife, although he contended he had not done anything, but only thrown a glass against the wall. Had his wife fallen down, it was for another reason. The glass, he asserted, did not touch her. He had called for the emergency assistance right after.

1 “Recours à l’acte” defines a moment of derealisation that protects the subject from experiencing annihilation, in an attempt to preserve their feeling of existence, threatened by a chaotic world.

In our sessions, Julien said he suffered from sleep paralysis: it felt like someone grabbed his feet and shook them, blocked his legs, and yelled at him. It was “the night mare”. He had trouble breathing, felt as if his lungs were closing and said he literally lost his life.

Julien mentioned that when he first saw his wife upon being admitted to jail, he felt like his “heart was clogged” when he returned to his cell: his heart ached. He started crying during that session. He felt dizzy and had trouble walking. To him, one can have no heart in prison. He could not feel himself; his body and his head lay “poles apart” from him. I suggested he drew the way he saw himself. His drawings took on geometric forms. A rat crept into his head and skirted around a hole in his torso, trying not to fall through it. He also felt he had a hole in his head and his torso. Thus, these locked up body areas and eventually the whole imprisoned body appear to be linked to a hole that can be entered into (such is the case for his head), but also fallen through (such is the case for his torso or his heart).

Drawing 1



In the next session, Julien said he fell out of bed while sleeping for the first time, an experience that repeated several times.

Julien’s suffering was thus expressed through his body. By taking over his body, it was as if the nightmare took away his life. Was death an experience of falling into a hole? It was as though Julien would fall into his own heart, in his torso, a life symbol turned into nothingness, a bottomless hole. Julien expressed merged internal and external sensations, as if his nightmare were another person’s. He felt as though he shared his daily life with it, even when he walked out to the prison yard, since he kept thinking about it. He also related the hole in his head to a button at the back of his head. Yet in opposition to a hole, that button bulged out, as if his sensations were reverted, and manifested in a mirrored image. Julien’s sensory experiences had to do with formal signifiers (Anzieu, 1987), that is to say action within a two-dimensional spectator less space, quite distinct from a three-dimensional-space fantasy scenario. In formal signifiers, space and matter are merged into forms made out of tactile, proprioceptive, kinaesthetic, postural, vestibular images. Formal signifiers trigger a body transformation, together with the feeling that forms are uncanny, and even non-human. Indeed, Julien felt his body turned foreign to him. He felt he was in a body-to-body experience with the figures and the medium of his drawings, as if he were a felt-tip pen. These experiences are mainly two-dimensional (Bick, 1968) because internal and external spaces are merged together, and one is clinging to undifferentiated objects, and stuck in circular immutable time.

The prison world affects the subject’s relationship to time and space, but also their relationship to themselves. According to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, the subject experiences deterritorialisation:

“One has become imperceptible and clandestine in motionless voyage. Nothing can happen, or can have happened, any longer. Nobody can do anything for or against me any longer. My territories are out of grasp, not because they are imaginary, but the opposite: because I am in the process of drawing them. Wars, big and little, are behind me. Voyages, always in tow to something else, are behind me. I no longer have any secrets, having lost my face, form, and matter. I am now no more than a line. I have become capable of loving, not with an abstract, universal love, but a love I shall choose, and that shall choose me, blindly, my double, just as selfless as I. One has been saved by and for love, by abandoning love and self. Now one is no more than an abstract line, like an arrow crossing the void. Absolute deterritorialisation. One has become like everybody/the whole world (*tout le monde*), but in a way that can become like everybody/ the whole world. One has painted the world on oneself, not oneself on the world.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 199-200)

In Julien’s narrative, the passivation a deterritorialised subject may experience stands out. The subject’s territory is out of their grasp, but their body seems “grasped away” by the penitentiary, dispossessed, and de-subjectivised. The subject is wiped out by deterritorialisation, they disappear, to the point of becoming but a line. A hollow, impalpable mark is left on them, taking them back to what they would rather not *be*.

According to psychologist and phenomenologist J. Englebert (2010), prison time gets superimposed on vital temporality and de-subjectivises the supposed subject. A penitentiary rhythm is forced upon the fundamental rhythms of human life, such as those of eating, alternate sleep and wake, thermal regulation, bodily hygiene, and external visits. Through this violent passivation enforced by the penitentiary system, the prisoner gets the paradoxical sense that time is frozen and endless. J. Englebert relates an example from the report *Une vie en prison (A Life in Prison)* released in 2006 by Montigny Didier: during a forty-one-year incarceration, an inmate’s most important life change occurred when, in 1973 in France, all the inmates were given back their watches. It was as if the watch, a personal object, enabled them to appropriate back their subjective temporality.

Space-wise, an inmate’s cell becomes their only vital space: overcrowding involves impersonally organised space shared with stranger fellow inmates chosen by the penitentiary administration. Freedom deprivation, confinement, and prison etymologically refer to the notion of space and to the ontological situation of the inmate. One could contend there is a doublebind bodily injunction in the penitentiary world (Englebert, 2010). Subjects have to adapt to the space, time and rhythm of the prison, while at the same time taking charge of their own life and devising future projects, aimed at social rehabilitation. The body is therefore the subject of the penitentiary system and gets subjected to a series of paradoxes. The “[...] prison world is the work of a subject submitted to a rhythmicity that estranges them from void, if not from themselves, and yet is embodied by them.” (Englebert, 2013, p. 322) The body thus turns into the inmate’s own prison, and becomes one with the prison world.

Prison space-time then distorts the “bodily space-time, which, according to psychoanalyst S. Le Poulichet,

“[...] appears as a flexible field specific to each individual, deforming and reforming itself along the links and ruptures of links to others, but also along the representations’ connections and the fate of more or less precocious bodily events.” (Le Poulichet, 2018a, p. 88)

Julien’s falls out of bed devastated him, as if the nightmare had taken possession of his body and made him fall. In the prison environment, where the real overtakes the imaginary (Englebert, 2019), action outdoes fantasy. In Julien’s case, the fear of falling went so far as to be performed in reality through “the nightmare”. For another patient, prison felt like a tiny country, a miniscule, yet not geographically localisable space. Another patient imagined he was orbiting the Earth. Time, infinite yet frozen, had become inconsistent. Julien’s body, a mirror of the prison world, took up these properties into its “bodily space-time”. To him, days were like “photocopies”. He felt he had been incarcerated for decades, while he had been admitted in for less than one year. He also felt dizzy, “[his] legs did not follow [him] anymore,” as he put it. He felt he was fading away, like a star that no longer shone, as if he was sucked into his own penitentiary body and disappeared, falling into the black hole of prison, of his body, and of his heart. The black hole swallows both the prison space-time and the bodily space-time, merging them together and distorting them. Although these experiences are basically two-dimensional (Bick, 1968), as mentioned above, they may also be one-dimensional (Meltzer, 1975). Indeed, when time merges with (space defined) distance, the

subject is but a sensory contact point at time T. The subject experiences space-time lack of continuity combined with the sense they faded away between one sensory (nearly clinging) contact time T and another. In both cases (one-dimensionality and bi-dimensionality), the subject drifts across a depthless space-time (a tridimensional one, according to D. Meltzer, 1975), and turns into a “line”, in the words of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1980, p. 244), or a felt tip pen in Julien’s.

The prison world thus results in deterritorialisation, but also denaturation, which several authors describe as, “the set of processes that tear away from the recluse what is constitutively theirs and affect them in their original carnal depth.” (Chamond *et al.*, 2014, p. 674). The body proper is disowned, turned into pure negativity, a consequence of prison’s denaturation. This can lead subjects to be outside of themselves. In the fields of geriatrics, extreme disability and autism, S. Korff-Sausse observed that motor regression produced “a body destined to formlessness and timelessness, lacking space and time” (Korff-Sausse, 2003, p. 58). The regression resulting from confinement, together with movement restriction, can cause some inmates’ body proper to disappear: “There is no body without temporality, but no temporality without a body.” (Korff-Sausse, 2003, p. 57). I could add that without space and movement, there can be no body, and vice versa.

This disappearance of the subject is reflected in the unconscious image of their body. The latter, according to psychoanalyst F. Dolto (1984), represents the way desire is inscribed, symbolised and body-experienced at the unconscious level. Patients’ drawings representing them in prison and outside of it testify to how their body image has been damaged by the prison world. For example, extremities may disappear (hands, feet), along with larger parts of the body (such as the absence of legs), and the size of the represented bodies may shrink. This is indeed a consequence of the black hole: the objects that fall into it eventually disappear. These repercussions on the body image may shed a new light on the bodily ego regression. For S. Freud “the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface” (Freud, 1923, p. 26). The ego derives from the bodily ego and represents the surface of the mental apparatus. According to G. Haag (2009), falling anxieties occur at the beginning of the bodily ego constitution. By generating an extreme passivation, the prison world can make subjects regress to quasi-absolute dependence, since prison and life space-time get merged together, causing them to experience the primitive agonies described by D. W. Winnicott (1989). Indeed, these include falling, sense of reality losing, psychosomatic unbinding, and object-relation capacity losing experiences. These echo a breakdown which already took place unconsciously, without being integrated, since the self was too immature to assimilate all these experiences at that moment. To protect oneself from these primitive agonies, and out of the fear of breakdown, a subject may conjure up organised defences against them. However, in Julien’s case, the black hole involves the body, and more particularly the bodily ego. The black hole corresponds to an unconsciously lived experience the bodily ego was still too immature to integrate as its own.

While experiencing unconscious body image and bodily ego regressions, the subject that drifts across the black hole falls back in time and their body proper space shrinks. This may account for Julien’s feeling of fading away, disappearing. It is as if he was taken back to

an ancient unknown time devoid of space, and therefore of his own body, a hollow matter less world, before any form or content were created, an eternal world. According to S. Le Poulichet, “[...] a bottomless internal hole may open, and expose the subject to the threat of constantly falling into their own body.” (Le Poulichet, 2016b, p. 9) A hole is hollow, and involves void and falling. Black conveys an absence of light. One patient claimed he saw everything “in black” in prison, as if he were wearing sunglasses, while he could see all the colours outside. A black hole swallows in matter, light included, but leads nowhere. Time freezes, the incorporated object goes in circles, comes to a standstill, and disappears into nothingness. According to S. Le Poulichet, “[...] the external invasion from outside becomes an internal gap [...]” (Le Poulichet, 2016b, p. 9), just as the hole in prison becomes a hole in the body, and in the midst of it, a hole in the heart. According to that psychoanalyst, there are holes in time, and holes in space. When drifting across the black hole, the subject is caught in a paradox: they are sucked in within themselves and yet stand outside of themselves because they faded away. The difference between inside and outside, body proper and the prison world, bodily space-time and prison space-time vanishes away.

The Black Hole and the “Recours à l’Acte”

Julien contended he had “touched [his] heart” when he threw the glass against the wall during the incident. It was as if, instead of touching his wife's body, the glass had penetrated his, striking him in the heart and putting his life in danger. This was the experience that obsessed him: being haunted by death, as shown by another of his drawings.

This implied a certain confusion between his wife and him had taken place. Similarly, in his psychosomatic reactions, he felt pain in the same head spot his wife had bled from. Julien also mentioned he coughed up blood and felt his head and his heart were going to explode. As an afterwards effect of his incarceration, he had a sense of his own death, and of what his wife experienced during that extremely violent incident. His wife was the one to fall down when he threw the glass – due to some other reason, he asserted – while in prison, he was the one who repeatedly fell out of his bed in his sleep. He had never experienced that before. Throwing the glass, he said, he had walked through a looking glass, as if he had swapped bodies with his wife.

C. Balier (2005) defined the “recours à l’acte” as defence against an ego disorganisation verging on psychosis: it is a means of psychic survival. The victim reminds of the primary object, and subject and victim get merged together. This causes an anxiety of annihilation and produces uncontrollable excitement. While the object, as such, disappears, the subject is exposed to the threat of disappearing too (Balier, 2005). The “recours à l’acte” stems from narcissistic omnipotence in reaction to this continuity-of-existencethreatening agony. The subject then lives on as if nothing had happened, thanks to ego splitting and denial, as if someone else had acted out instead of them. According to C. Balier, the threat of disappearing involves those who could not achieve a “genuine subject status” [...] (Balier, 2005, p. 373).

Drawing 2 – Julien in his cell



To comment his murderous act, a patient mentioned he had “lost his sense”. When he came to himself, he realised the victim was in danger, so he called for help. To him, there remained only a “black hole”. Other authors have set forth the link between the “recours à l’acte” and the black hole (Legendre, Truffaut, 2019). Extreme violence, because of the ego splitting, occurs as a non-event, causing the subject to feel they stand outside of their body and their self, as if someone else acted instead of them. But also, denial is increased by the fact that this event did not happen for the subject. During the “recours à l’acte”, drifting through the black hole goes together with ego splitting and denial. The sense one lived a non-event echoes the primitive agonies a still too immature ego could not integrate, as stressed above with D. W. Winnicott. Here, what stands out is not so much a fear of breakdown as a drifting across a black hole. Indeed, the agony of endlessly falling combines with the threat to the continuity of existence, as the subject runs the risk of disappearing while falling into themselves. In another drawing Julien depicted his heart, shrunk, and when touched by the glass, blown out and broken, then finally vanished.

This may shed light on another difference between drifting across a black hole and the fear of breakdown. Falling into a black hole threatens a subject’s feeling of existence, and their capacity to be a subject, and inhabit their own body. When he fell into the black hole, Julien left his body. It was no longer his body, he asserted. Falling into the black hole, he *took* his wife’s body as the glass stroke him, in an attempt to survive his own disappearance. Yet in prison, “the nightmare” *took* his body, moved it, and made it fall down, with the same violence he used against his wife. He had himself fall from his bed just as he had her fall to the ground.

According to C. Balier (2005), during the “recours à l’acte”, a subject summons the original penetrator-penetrated pictogram described by P. Aulagnier (1975) and designed after the mouth-breast encounter. A perceived sign produces a “penetrator-penetrated” effect through an experience of destruction and confusion with the victim, similar to the original fusion with the maternal breast. The confusion with the victim together with the traces of this pictogram produce uncontrollable excitement, as this subject feels penetrated (by the glass) while he penetrates the victim. Places and bodies are swapped, as is the case when Julien asserted the glass touched his body, whereas the filed claim stated it touched his wife’s body, causing her to fall down. In *The Black Hole of the Psyche* (1985), F. Tustin relates the clinical situation of an autistic child, John, who mentions a “black hole with a stinging villain”. He thought a “red button” was his mouth, whereas it was in fact the nipple of his mother's breast. When he realised his body was separated from his mother's, the breast started spitting flames and became a black hole. To John, indeed, bad things become black once burnt. The hole meant the disappearance and absence of the red button, becoming a nipple, which can read as the disappearance of a part of his own body, since he lost something he thought was his. Therefore, according to F. Tustin, black refers to what disappears from consciousness, notably through autistic stereotypies, in order to avoid any frustration, regret or wait for the red button. Thus, in a fit of rage, John blew out and rejected the “ugly button” as if rejecting the external world and the other which stood beside his body proper. This opened a black hole. Destroying the other’s body therefore allowed to safeguard his own. However, because self

Drawing 3 – Drawing of his heart



and other are merged, blowing the other up is tantamount to blowing oneself up, either through rage, for John, or through the “recours à l’acte”, for Julien. If the other disappears, the subject disappears too: one only body is given to both (McDougall, 1989) and turns into nothingness when falling into the black hole. According to the psychoanalyst J. McDougall, at the beginning of a baby’s life, they experience being one with their mother, as if there were one only body for two. This original and primordial experience echoes the feeling of being one, in symbiosis, with merged bodies, as it was the case for John and Julien. The subject senses they are neither their mother’s body, nor their own, but both, with no sex differentiation. In Julien’s case, falling into the black hole combined with the original penetrating-penetrated pictogram, in a confusion between the internal and external worlds, as was stressed in his penitentiary and “recours à l’acte” experiences. Penetrating the black hole, he fell into his own body, thus reverting violence against himself.

It is quite hard to walk into a prison if you do not work there (one must obtain a restricted area pass, be searched, checked at each door by the guards, and walk through many doors to get inside, etc.). For an inmate, sneaking in a telephone or cannabis can be exhilarating. Society may harbour many fantasies about prison life, since little is known about what goes on inside. This violence-soaked environment, with specific laws applying to the inmates and guards may perpetuate many traumas, reinforcing or damaging the inmates’ defence mechanisms. A patient who was incarcerated for rape ended up fearing being raped. Another patient admitted in for homicide felt he was dead. It is as if, in prison, one was hurled back to one’s past, and the moment of “recours à l’acte”. It is as though the original penetratingpenetrated pictogram were experienced a new, with subjects becoming their victims, through a confusion between prison-subject-victim bodies.

In a session, Julien stated his nightmare uttered: “here you go, fire”. He could not understand. When he woke up, he put his clothes in the fridge in an attempt to protect himself from the fire and also from the risk of dying. He then recalled an inmate he knew who had committed suicide by setting fire to himself, and whose cell was close to his. Julien’s nightmare took the shape of this deceased inmate, resurfacing after wards, in the black night. It was shortly after I began meeting with Julien that this prisoner had committed suicide, but he had never mentioned it, as he did not seem to suffer from it. This made me wonder whether the trauma of the inmate’s suicide had also been split from Julien’s consciousness, causing the break-through of the split material to take the form of a nightmare, and contribute to the feeling he was dispossessed of his body proper. When Julien threw the glass, he felt he crossed to the other side, as if, at that very moment, his body and his wife’s were swapped. The nightmare that resurfaced during the night may stand for this “other” who acted out under the effect of the splitting, or for his wife. He could not figure out whether the nightmare was a male or a female figure. Therefore, the ghostly creature may stand for the bodies that surfaced from his split world and eventually confronted him to himself and to his own strangeness (Freud, 1919). According to C. Balier (1996), the resurfacing primal scene becomes uncanny; fantasies take the shape of phantoms that haunt the subject. Balier contends that in order for a subject not to become the victim of their own violence, they reduce the victim to a thing, a

mere perception, to remain affectively untouched and sooth their annihilation agonies. The fantasy is thus curtailed.

It was only after he saw his wife that Julien started feeling his heart ached and had a hole in it. Later, he fell out of his bed. We may wonder whether his heart was not “awakened” and the split material brought back to his mind when he saw his wife. The continuity-of-existence-threatening agonies he experienced seem to have been revived when he met with his wife, in that particular prison context. If Julien may have felt passivated by his own annihilation agonies, acting out seems to have been his way to overcome them. In prison, subjects are constantly made passive, since they scarcely can act (on their everyday life, but also as far as violence is concerned). Instead of acting against others, they may act back against themselves, and sometimes end up attempting suicide. The acting out, denial and splitting defence mechanisms may then be thwarted, giving way to annihilation agonies brought back by the split material break-through, just like in the black hole experience.

Thus, Julien’s confusion with his wife seems to confront him to his own death, to nothingness, but also unconsciously to the origin of his life, and to the primal scene. Both of Julien's parents had died in a car accident: they had fallen into a precipice. Julien stated his mother had “touched” his heart on hearing the news: “I was the one who left with my mother”. She used to tell him “you and I are one only heart”. He then realised that he had “forgotten everything”, including the date and announcement of their death. At that moment, he was with his wife and he fell down. “There are three of us and we are dead”, he added, thus including his father. As described above, the drift across the black hole affects the bodily self. It differs from the breakdown and relates to endlessly falling primitive agonies. Instead of falling into the outside world, the subject falls into himself, within a two-dimensional or even one-dimensional bodily space-time where bodies are merged. At the beginning of their life, a baby cannot integrate this original symbiosis experience due to their still immature bodily ego. A subject can then experience annihilation agonies afterwards, and feel fusion and the threat their body may be reduced to nothingness, as if standing on the verge of a black hole. According to R. Roussillon (1999), the splitting defence may follow a primary trauma, in which a subject tried to cast away the dreaded representation and agony. A non-event, an experience a subject cannot integrate as their own because of their immaturity, may count as a trauma, since the subject feels outside of themselves. While R. Roussillon mainly refers to primitive agonies, and thus to the ego, the black hole could rather be linked to a splitting of bodily ego and may be similar to an original trauma where bodies are merged. These defence mechanisms would then allow the infant to continue their development and regulate their inner state of chaos.

The fear of falling also echoes the infant’s discovery of gravity, when leaving the womb, and the subsequent discovery of the weight of their own body. During the interviews, Julien was particularly worried about his weight loss and his thinning face. It was as though his body proper was vanishing away back into the time before he was born, and into the weightless uterine space (Bullinger, 2013). His actual fall, as he fell out of his bed, may also echo those until then not experienced annihilation agonies. It was as though he were discovering for the first time the gravity linked to birth, and bodies separation in reality. Julien

felt haunted by his nightmares, and yet, at the same time, discovered he had a capacity for reverie. He stated he had never dreamt before, not even before he was incarcerated. It was as if he realised he could actually feel, through his body, subjective experience that can be narrated, or drawn. When he recalled the news of his parents’ death, Julien felt his heart had moved. I told him that it had perhaps moved back into his body. The heart ache he felt could then convey an attempt to separate bodies. Drifting across the black hole, a drift across “being- in-one’s-body-proper” could then be a way to gain a body-for-oneself to be.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anzieu, D. (1987). Les signifiants formels et le Moi-Peau. In Anzieu, D. et al. (Ed.). *Les enveloppes psychiques* (1-22). Paris: Dunod.
- Aulagnier, P. (1975). *La violence de l’interprétation : du pictogramme à l’énoncé*. Paris: PUF.
- Balier, C. (1996). *Psychanalyse des comportements sexuels violents*. Paris: PUF.
- Balier, C. (2010). *La violence en abyme. Essai de psychocriminologie* (2005). Paris: PUF.
- Bick, E. (1998). L’expérience de la peau dans les relations d’objet précoces. In Harris, M., Bick, E., Harris-Williams, M., & Pourrinet J. (Ed.) (1968). *Les Écrits de Martha Harris et d’Esther Bick* (135-139). Larmor-Plage: Éditions du Hublot.
- Bullinger, A. (2013). Les représentations de l’organisme dans l’autisme, perspective développementale. *La revue lacanienne*, 1(1), 173-177.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/lrl.131.0173>
- Chamond, J., Moreira, V., Decocq, F. & Leroy-Viémon, B. (2014). La dénaturation carcérale. Pour une psychologie et une phénoménologie du corps en prison. *L’information psychiatrique*, 8(8), 673-682. <https://doi.org/10.1684/ipe.2014.1252>
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Dolto, F. (1984). *L’image inconsciente du corps*. Paris: Le Seuil.
- Englebert, J. (2010). Préliminaire à l’étude de l’univers carcéral. *Psychologie Clinique*, 2(2), 136-149.
- Englebert, J. (2013). *Psychopathologie de l’homme en situation. Le corps du détenu dans l’univers carcéral*. Paris: Hermann.
- Englebert, J. (2019). Enfermement carcéral, imaginaire et pathologie de l’adaptation. *Empan*, 2(2), 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.3917/empa.114.0022>
- Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et punir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Freud, S. (1933). L’inquiétante étrangeté [*Das Unheimliche*] (1919). (Bonaparte, M. & Marty, E. Trad.). *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée* (163-211). Paris: Gallimard.
- Freud, S. (1961). The Ego and the Id (1923). *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, XIX. (12-59). London: Hogarth Press.
- Haag, G. (2009). Place de la structuration de l’image du corps et grille de repérage clinique des étapes évolutives de l’autisme infantile. *Enfance*, 1(1), 121-132.

[https:// doi.org/10.4074/S0013754509001141](https://doi.org/10.4074/S0013754509001141)

Korff-Sausse, S. (2003). Hors norme. Hors temps : L’expérience de la temporalité dans le champ clinique du handicap. *Champ psychosomatique*, 2(2), 57-73.

[https:// doi.org/10.3917/cpsy.030.0057](https://doi.org/10.3917/cpsy.030.0057)

Legendre, C. & Truffaut, J. (2019). Chapitre 15. Traverser le trou noir : L’abord du trauma en art-thérapie chez les auteurs de viols à répétition. In Coutanceau, R. (Ed.), *Sexualités et transgressions : La question de l’altérité* (159-165). Paris: Dunod.

Le Poulichet, S. (2018a). Espace-temps corporel et symbolisation. *Cliniques méditerranéennes*, 1(1), 79-90. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cm.097.0079>

Le Poulichet, S. (2018b). *Les poétiques du corps. Actes de naissance en analyse*. Paris: Hermann.

McDougall, J. (1989). *Théâtres du corps : le psychosoma en psychanalyse*. Paris: Gallimard.

Meltzer, D. (2002). Chapitre IX. La dimensionnalité comme paramètre du fonctionnement mental : sa relation à l’organisation narcissique. In Meltzer, D., Bremner, J., Hoxter, S., Weddell, D., Wittenberg, I. (Ed.). *Explorations dans le monde de l’autisme [Explorations in Autism]* (1975) (277-296). (Haag, G., Haag, M., Iselin, L., Maufras du Châtelier, A. & Nagler, G. Trad.). Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages.

Roussillon, R. (1999). *Agonie, clivage, symbolisation*. Paris: PUF.

Tustin, F. (1989). *Le trou noir de la psyché* (1985) (55-57). Paris: Seuil.

Winnicott, D. W. (2000). La crainte de l’effondrement (1989). *La crainte de l’effondrement et autres situations cliniques* (205-216). Paris: Gallimard.