

A CASE OF FETISHISM TREATED WITH LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE

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In previous papers (9, 10) the author and his colleagues have described the treatment of a series of patients with lysergic acid diethylamide in general terms. This paper describes the detailed treatment of a case of fetishism in a male patient. Abramson (1) describes the use of lysergic acid diethylamide (hereafter LSD) as an adjunct to psychotherapy in a case showing resistance to further analysis. He used LSD for one four-hour interview, but there does not appear to be any reference in the literature to a case treated throughout with the aid of LSD.

The patient, aged 33, presented himself in May, 1955, with the principal symptom that he had married in December, 1954, and that the marriage had remained unconsummated.

History of Complaint. For many years the patient had been attracted by mackintoshes and other rubberized clothing, e.g. golfing trousers. At the age of five he refused to wear a rubberized mackintosh and he was locked up as punishment; while locked up for this and other offenses he developed the practice of tying himself up. At the age of 11 or 12 he began to wear a mackintosh in bed and to tie himself up, causing perspiration and discomfort. This behavior was associated with masturbation.

In later years he was attracted by women's mackintoshes, rubber aprons and golfers' clothing which excited him when worn against the skin and under normal garments.

The sound of the rubber garment and particularly the smell attracted him. Since his marriage he had worn rubber garments in his wife's presence without satisfaction and with feelings of guilt.

In sexual relationships with his wife he was impotent.

Personal History. The patient had been an only child, shy, with individual friends but unable to enjoy a group. He was educated at a private preparatory school and, later, at a grammar school. He obtained matriculation exemption at the age of 16 and had a university education with a pass degree in Civil Engineering in 1942, but he was dissatisfied and felt he should have taken a degree in languages.

He was employed in Great Western Railway Engineer's Office until 1946 when he left to accept employment as a teacher. Self-taught, he passed the intermediate B.A. in Latin, French and Russian. Since 1951 he has been teaching mathematics and engineering at a technical school.

The patient's father, now retired, had been a reporter. The father is described as an intelligent, self-taught man, an atheist, of wider interests than the mother. An irascible man with little interest in his son, he has admitted that his first reaction to the child was that he was a competitor. The patient's mother, herself an only child, had a strict religious upbringing and is now interested solely in the home and the patient.

Examination of Patient. In examination he impressed as being an intelligent man, acutely aware of his need for treatment. In discussion it emerged that his languages had some fetish quality for him in that he studied languages fanatically when his everyday work proved unsatisfactory. He was aware

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of his inadequacy as a schoolmaster in being unable to maintain discipline and keep the attention of his students.

On the progressive matrices he was found to be of superior intelligence, being above the 75th and below the 90th percentile. Personality was assessed from the Rorschach test, the report of which was of interest in a number of respects. His poor ego strength, together with little capacity for personal relationships and little contact with the outside world, were reported as being in accord with his inability to join group activities. The reference to an apparent importance of tactile sensation, *e.g.* 'feeling' the spine in Card IX, is of interest in view of his fetish. The patient's reporting of male characteristics in Cards II and VI may be interpreted as suggesting underlying homosexuality.

Diagnosis. The diagnosis was made of fetishism with masochism, to be treated by psychotherapy assisted by LSD. The technique of administration of LSD has been described in the previous papers (9, 10). The patient was given LSD on 32 occasions, mainly weekly, between May, 1955, and March, 1956, in doses usually of 100–125 micrograms. The number of LSD sessions, in this case, was less than average for such a case and the dosage required to produce satisfactory response was less than has often been found necessary.

COURSE OF TREATMENT

Under treatment a mood of self-examination was induced with occasional hallucinations and alteration of body image and, later, with some relevant dreams. On numerous occasions he reported that he regarded his wife as a mother on his return from treatment.

Early in treatment the patient became very critical of himself, feeling that his sexual perversion had sapped his confidence, but his progress in studying languages gave him the necessary pride in achievement to continue living, so that the languages had themselves become a solace to him.

In common with several other patients treated at this hospital, he had a re-birth experience, feeling that he was once more in his mother's womb and had a barrier to penetrate to enter a new world where his fetish did not exist.

In subsequent treatments he referred again to this barrier. He described it as preventing him "from feeling the love of another and from even imagining the association between sexual intercourse and the orgasm—between the physical act and the emotions associated with it. I realized I had turned inwards to myself feelings which should have been turned out-wards toward another or others."

He ascribed his lack of confidence to the absence of the security of love in his parents' home, and described his fear of his father who was dogmatic and bullying.

After three months of treatment, he reported two dreams of some significance. In the first he was with his mother buying a mackintosh sleeping bag. In the second he and his wife were together in a mackintosh sleeping bag.

During the fourth month of treatment, he had an LSD experience in which he was in a room where was seated a wise and kind old man. His wife was present and he identified the kind old man "as the father of my wife and myself and of us all." He seemed to see his wife begging her "father" to make him fit for her as she had tired of waiting.

In the following month he had a hallucination of a hand emerging from a black rubber sleeve like a motor cyclist's, and it stimulated him to examine the development of his fetish. He recalled a stage in early childhood when pleasant emotion was aroused when he was deprived of comfort by being tied up or locked in an uncomfortable place.

With the later "mackintosh" stage began a preference for motor cyclist's garments and he had a mackintosh of this material at about the age of five. He recalled trying to tie himself to a door handle by the belt of this garment. Later developed his fascina-

tion for women's mackintoshes with rubberized linings.

Later in the same month while under LSD, the patient remembered having a white rubber doll given to him at about the age of one (this information was later confirmed by the mother). He used to cuddle it at night. Later, people wearing rubberized mackintoshes became important as "rubber people" and he, having a similar mackintosh at an early age, similarly became a "rubber person." The patient commented, "I would associate this material (rubber) with being deprived of my mother at night and found consolation in the doll."

During treatment he developed an insight into his lack of success in teaching. He realized that his lack of confidence could be overcome and that he could take more interest in his work as it was of use to others. His new attitude to teaching was invested with emotion and seemed not merely the result of an intellectual exercise.

In a strong reaction to LSD in January, 1956, he compared his past life with the fetish, and his creative life with his wife. He felt loathing for the fetish for the first time and "wished to destroy the person who worshipped it." Later he felt he had integrated this person into his new self.

In the following month he gradually became aware of his need for his wife, having been previously preoccupied with the need for his mother, and the fact that this need was mutual and excluded his fetish. Previously he had described a feeling of guilt when sleeping with his wife. He steadily developed awareness of having given up the struggle with reality from an early age. He had failed in face of difficult circumstances and withdrawn into his artificially created world.

In March, 1956, the patient noticed a woman wearing a glistening white mackintosh in the street. He thought that his original attraction had been to something smooth and glistening and this suggested either his mother's nipples or the nipple of

a nursing bottle. He remembered the attraction that the sheen of a mackintosh had for him at the age of three or four, which was confined, at that time, to garments rubberized on the outside which glistened especially in the rain.

Later in the same month he had an LSD experience which brought in the gratification, to the extent of orgasm, which he achieved from tying himself up or by imagining himself tied to something. The pleasure seemed to arise from feeling himself utterly at the mercy of someone or something. Sometimes the thought consisted of imagining himself being confined hopelessly in a very small space into which he could just fit.

PROGRESS

Drug treatment was stopped at this stage as it seemed that all the relevant material had emerged, and the patient was given an account of the phases of sexual development. The fetish significance and the pleasure in restriction was discussed and explained in relation to the oral phase of development and infancy. His impotence was elaborated in the context of the Oedipus situation. The patient seemingly accepted the explanation and his first reaction was of satisfaction with the insight he had gained into himself. Progress in achieving sexual intercourse with his wife was slower, as she developed some negative feelings toward intercourse at this time. She was unable to correlate sexual intercourse and love, and her disgust was increased by some clumsy attempts on the patient's part.

This failure caused the patient to revert for satisfaction to his languages which he studied for several hours a day; he did not actively return to his fetish, however.

Over the next four months his wife's health was poor and he did not achieve penetration until September, 1956. In the following month he dreamed that he wished he was married to his mother and that only his father prevented this desire from being a

fact. He also dreamed that he was attired in his fetish in bed, a bed with sheets of rubber. Then his mother got into bed with him, at which point he had an emission and awoke.

At about this time he associated the smell of warm milk with that of mackintosh and when attempting intercourse with his wife, on one occasion, he had the feeling that it was his mother he was with and that he must not attempt penetration. This feeling was, of course, sharply inhibiting.

Early in December, 1956, penetration with increasing satisfaction to both the patient and his wife was again achieved. He still dreamed of his fetish: for example, he was in a room wearing only a pair of mackintosh trousers and was aware of the clamminess of the garment around him, and stated that the most important part of the lure of a mackintosh garment was its clammy feeling, and for that reason he wore such garments next to the skin. He concluded that "this seems to me that in stimulating myself in this way I am reproducing conditions produced by my mother in infancy."

From the cessation of LSD treatments in March of 1956 he was seen at intervals of two to three weeks and ultimately in May, 1957, he achieved orgasm, two years after treatment was started. Again, his wife's variable attitude delayed progress, but in September, 1957, he reported regular and successful relations over the previous eleven weeks and was thereupon discharged.

At a follow-up interview three months later the patient reported that his wife was three months pregnant and even though she had been in hospital with hyperemesis and he had been living with his own parents, he had not returned to his fetish or the solace of languages.

In summarizing the clinical material obtained from this patient under LSD treatment, it is worthy of note that most of the material produced was relevant and that

there was little diversion into the irrelevancies which often delay formal analysis. In contrast to much material elicited in earlier work at this hospital which, as described by Sandison (8) showed a Jungian bias, this case seemed to develop along Freudian lines. Other cases of sexual problems in men treated by the author have proceeded along very similar lines. It should be noted that this case yielded one archetypal experience, as described above.

DISCUSSION

The psychopathology of fetishism remains a subject for considerable discussion. The presented case is interesting in that the patient appeared to show fetishism in a pure form, uncomplicated by homosexuality or transvestism. This would appear to be in agreement with Freud's (4) statement that fetishism is a safeguard against homosexuality, though this is not accepted by Weissman (11) in his recent paper.

Regarding the significance of the fetish object, Wulff (13) describes five cases of fetish objects in childhood and concludes that in infantile fetishism normal development is disturbed by adherence to the first object of the oral component of the sexual instinct, the breast. Winnicott (12), however, criticizes this viewpoint and believes that these are normal transitional objects and a healthy experience.

Hadfield (6) states that he had found the fetishistic object to be a breast substitute in all cases he has analyzed, and Allen (2) supports his view.

There is, however, a large body of analytic opinion, notably including Greenacre (5), Gillespie (4), Payne (7) and Freud (3) himself, which regards fetishism as caused by castration trauma and anxiety. Such were not shown by the patient described here. It seems that there are still grounds for a theoretical discussion of the pathology of fetishism.

In assessing the value of LSD in treating

this patient, an attempt was made to find reports of similar cases in the literature, to compare the length of treatment required before symptoms were overcome. This has proved difficult; for instance, Gillespie (5) described a case treated for nearly three years before interruption of the analysis, in which mackintoshes played a part. He related the mackintosh fetish to much oral, anal and urethral material, but also to the period of milk feeding, the rubber of the mackintosh being a substitute for the rubber teat, "a memorial. . . to the trauma of weaning."

S. M. Payne (9) also illustrates her paper with an account of a mackintosh fetishist, but does not state the length of treatment. Together with other authors she stresses the importance of the smell and skin sensation of the fetish. These are both well illustrated in the present case, the importance of touch being suggested also in the interpretation of the Rorschach stimulus.

In the absence of reliable data on which to base comparisons, evaluating the effect of LSD becomes highly subjective. The writer has two strong impressions: that the use of the drug led to the emergence of relevant material much earlier than might have been expected without it, and that this effect enabled the therapist, who is not a psychoanalyst, to relieve the patient's symptoms. These are, of course, no more than clinical impressions. A carefully controlled trial of LSD in relation to psychotherapy will be necessary before its value can finally be assessed.

SUMMARY

A case of fetishism treated with psychotherapy assisted by LSD is described. The theories of the development of fetishism are discussed and an attempt is made to evaluate the drug.

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