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**Primitive Reparation and the Repetition Compulsion in the Analysis
of a Borderline Patient¹**

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1. Mature and primitive forms of reparation

It is generally assumed that attempts at reparation occur when the damage which was done to the object in reality or in phantasy can no longer be denied and feelings of guilt occur to prevent the loss of the loved object and to protect it from further injury or hurt. This development is made possible at the transition to the depressive position when persecutory anxiety lessens and splits can be overcome, and the individual makes the discovery that his feelings of love and hatred are directed towards the same object (Klein 1935; 1940; 1946). This experience may in turn be accompanied by intense feelings of conflict, which may lead to renewed splitting and escape into a psychic retreat. If all goes well, the processes of integration of the self are strengthened and the development of an internal space in which loss and mourning can be dealt with is promoted.

In this way reparation is seen as an elementary psychic process, which counters destruction and disintegration. In their work, Melanie Klein and Hanna Segal (1978; 1991) have shown that processes of reparation in the depressive position are closely linked to processes of symbol formation. These processes enable the small child to acknowledge separation and to symbolically restore the damaged and, to a certain extent, lost object.

But what happens in patients who are only partly or momentarily capable of such integration? Are there any moves towards the depressive position observable? What do such primitive attempts at reparation look like and what importance do they have on the analytic treatment process?

¹ Parts of the clinical material have been used in a previous publication (Weiss 2012) and in a communication by the Melanie Klein Trust, London (www.melanie-klein-trust.org.uk)

Henry Rey (1986) was one of the first authors to describe the precursors of the processes of reparation in schizoid and borderline patients. He regarded reparation as a universal occurrence, akin to such biological processes as maintenance and renewal of the organism. Referring back to Freud (1911c) he pointed out that even schizophrenic patients endeavour to repair their fragmented internal world. In this way, delusional ideas can be regarded as desperate attempts to protect the self from complete disintegration and fragmentation. However, the price to be paid for this restitution by omnipotent and psychotic means is the loss of contact with reality.

In patients with pathological personality organisations the conditions are somewhat different. Here too we find different forms of primitive reparation, but without overt breakdown in external reality.

For example, compulsive rituals can be understood as an attempt to magically repair an object, which has been damaged by sadistic attacks and has possibly become vengeful. In contrast, other efforts of compulsive neurotics predominantly serve the prevention of further damage and the control of the object, rather than any real acknowledgement of separation and guilt.

Grievance and resentment is another significant clinical constellation. The patient ceaselessly demands reparation from his objects, but keeps the wounds open and ultimately does not allow for reparation to take place (see Feldman 1997). Grievance can therefore be described as a condition in which the need for reparation is projected and recurs as *an unrealisable demand for reparation*.

Manic forms of reparation are predominantly seen in narcissistic patients. They show traits of omnipotent denial, which is supposed to get rid of guilt and in this way actually renews the hurt and damage done to the object. The godlike grandiosity of Oedipus at Colonus (Steiner 1990) or the grandiosity of King Lear (Rusbridger 2011) are examples of this.

Lastly, if we regard the self mutilation of some borderline patients as a concrete attempt at reparation, it becomes clear how measures aimed at sanctioning and control possibly robs them of the only means they possess to repair their damaged internal objects.

In comparing these primitive precursors with more mature forms of reparation they seem to promote continual damage to the object thus leading to a *vicious circle*. Certain manifestations of the repetition compulsion can thus be seen as desperate, failing attempts at

reparation.. These patients resemble the figures of Greek mythology (Sisyphos, Prometheus, Tantalos), whose rebellion against the gods (the primitive super-ego) leads to endless torment and punishment.

2. Attempts at reparation and the evolution of the super-ego

This introduces the role of the super-ego into the processes of reparation and their success or failure. In the following discussion, I would like to look at those processes, which make reparation possible in some cases and block it permanently in others. I will take Melanie Klein's thesis as a starting point, that *it is the evolution of the super-ego which makes reparation possible, whilst under the domination of an archaic super-ego the damage is repeated endlessly.*

Klein published her thoughts on this in her late paper "*On the Development of Mental Functioning*" (1958). She argues that the early archaic super-ego originates from split-off, destructive parts of the self. In its early stages one could conceptualise it as a kind of '*bad bank*', in which primitive destructive impulses as well as persecutory projections are stored in order to protect the ego from fragmentation.. However, in the course of development, elements of the life instinct and loving experiences are continuously introduced into this rudimentary super-ego structure and thus gradually change its character which allows for a beneficial development of its relationship with the ego.

Klein describes it thus:

'As the process of integration (...) goes on, the death instinct is bound, up to a point, by the super-ego. In the process of binding, the death instinct influences the aspects of the good objects contained in the super-ego, with the result that the action of the super-ego ranges from restraint of hate and destructive impulses, protection of the good object and self-criticism, to threats, inhibitory complaints and persecution.' (1958, p. 240)

If the positive qualities predominate, the sadistic traits of the super-ego recede into the background. While the primitive super-ego poses a constant threat to the ego, the developing super-ego can increasingly assume a containment function for the ego. In my view, Klein has clearly described this *intra-psychic containment function of the super-ego* in relation to the ego when she writes:

‘The super-ego – being bound up with the good object and even striving for its preservation – comes close to the actual good mother, who feeds the child and takes care of it’ (p. 240).

One of its functions is to continue with the imposition of prohibitions and prescriptions, which, however, are no longer directed in a sadistic way against the ego. To some extent, when development goes well, Klein continues, ‘the super-ego is largely felt as helpful and does not operate as too harsh a conscience.’ One of its functions now is ‘to protect the good object as well as safeguard him against persecutory anxieties.’ (p. 240)

What Klein describes here is the evolution of a super-ego from a ‘*bad bank*’ to a ‘*container*’ and eventually to an agency which enables the ego to *make reparation*. Hand in hand with this goes the development of the ego functions as well as an increasing tolerance of the super-ego by the ego with whom it ‘shares the different aspects of the same good object’ (p. 240)

Klein summarizes:

‘With the strengthening of the ego and its growing capacity for integration and synthesis, the phase of the depressive position is reached. At this stage the injured object is no longer predominantly felt as a persecutor, but as a loved object, towards whom a feeling of guilt and the urge to make reparation are experienced.’ (p. 241-242)

What is significant about Klein’s approach is the idea of an *evolution of super-ego structures* in close connection with the development or the blocking of ego functions. This means that the primitive super-ego structures have a lifelong existence alongside the mature super-ego and there is an ongoing exchange between them as there is a permanent interchange between ego and super-ego. Depending on how this exchange works out, different configurations will develop which will either promote processes of reparation or maintain a status quo where internal objects are constantly damaged and correspondingly have a detrimental influence on the ego functions. (vgl. Malcolm-Riesenberg 1988; O’Shaughnessy1999).

3. Processes which facilitate reparation and processes which systematically prevent reparation

I would like to go on to examine those processes which prevent genuine reparation using clinical material.

According to my assumptions primitive attempts at reparation are mainly distinguishable from mature reparation by (1) being relatively *concrete*, (2) *serving primarily to control anxiety*, (3) *not having a real capacity to acknowledge separation*, all of which lead (4) to a *pseudo acceptance of reality*.

Nevertheless these primitive attempts at reparation can be successful to a degree as long as they relieve anxiety and unbearable feelings of guilt. However, they deplete themselves in their attempt to avoid the experience of loss and to uphold the control over the object. I would like to show how these circumstances can lead to a situation in which the individual is forever caught up with his damaged internal objects.

4. Pathological Organisations

Clinically such configurations manifest as persistent reproaches, tortuous self-accusations, rancour, grievances, chronic contrition or as a longing for utopian states (Weiss 2011).. Characteristically, the suffering is kept going over long periods of time and each move towards change is often accompanied by a worsening of the clinical condition. As long as the patient clings on to misrepresentations of his internal and external reality, stability is achieved at the cost of contact and development.

In theory such states of psychic equilibrium have been described as 'pathological organisations of the personality' (Steiner 1993). Even earlier, Klein (1935) had considered the possibility of a 'manic' and 'obsessional position' at the transition between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. These 'positions' could consequently be characterized by disturbed and distorted processes of reparation under the dominance of a powerful, cruel super-ego. John Steiner (1992) expanded these conceptions and coined the term '*borderline position*'. The borderline position is an example of a pathological psychic equilibrium. Among other things it is characterised by a resistance to change, as well as an addiction-like adherence to states of psychic retreat.

I will now go on to describe a clinical example of a psychic retreat, which was mainly based on grievance and wrath repeatedly leading to impasse and dead ends in the analysis. I would like to show how the underlying organisation was based on a near delusional misrepresentation of reality, which drove the patient to suicidal crises whenever he moved closer

towards reparation, which made me doubt whether the treatment could be of any benefit to him. This evoked feelings of irritation and resignation in me, so that my capacity for reparation, too, was undermined and I found it difficult to maintain an attitude of unbiased understanding.

5. Clinical example: wrath, grievance and the impossibility of reparation

Mr. B. is a 30 year old student, grown up in a family who had moved to Germany from a completely different cultural background. Because of his foreign origins he was often picked on and teased as a child. This, together with his parents' pressure to conform and their traditional style of child education which included beatings, led to the repeated experience of humiliation and shame. He tried to overcome this by doing well at school and subsequently acquiring detailed knowledge of the financial markets. Through clever transactions this accrued him a fortune of several million dollars as early as by the age of 21. After feeling wrongly criticised by a superior he resigned from his job in an insurance company and decided to study economics with the aim of becoming a fund manager in an international stock exchange. In order to devote all his time to his studies, he entrusted the administration of his fortune to his father. However, when his father did not act fast enough during a crisis in the financial markets, most of the fortune was lost in a short time.

Mr. B.'s ensuing depression and feelings of quarrel made it difficult to study. He failed his exams narrowly several times, moved to another university and eventually gave up after the death of an idealised professor when a previously passed exam was not recognised. Since then he had withdrawn from the world and was full of resentment and contempt. He blamed his father's 'stupidity' for his failure and refused to try a new start in life. Instead he expected to be reimbursed for his unjust losses.

Thus he lived at home and tyrannised his parents, whom he accused of living in derelict squalor because they had not followed his 'instructions'. Related to this, I later learned, were accusations against the father that he had had an affair when the patient was around 14 years old and disappointment with his mother for having stayed with her husband. He had only once been able to voice his feelings towards a young woman and could never cope with her rejection. In the same year he witnessed the terror attack of the World Trade Centre in New York. In my view the collapse of the Twin Towers seemed to represent the collapse of his

omnipotent self as well as the murderous rage against his parents. So he spent most of his time in financial analyses in front of his computer, occasionally self harmed and let his parents feel his resentment. After several suicide threats he had started psychoanalytic treatment, which he experienced as a humiliating confirmation of his condition, as well as a futile effort to give him back his pride, success and financial independence.

Course of treatment

Already during one of our first sessions Mr. B. mentioned that he was not sure whether he might put a knife through his heart immediately afterwards. I was shocked and alarmed but also angered by his attack and interpreted that he was putting a knife to my chest and giving me the responsibility if things did not go the way he wanted. He made me understand that the treatment could not change much in any case and returned to his enraged accusations. At the end of another session, he said he could not imagine that any human being had ever been so unjustly humiliated as he had.

In the subsequent sessions, his attitude towards me varied between admiration, contempt or subjugation in relation to a cruel figure, who demanded 'absolute obedience'. I will go on to show that all three constellations contained aspects of a cruel, persecutory super-ego.

In the subsequent long period of his analysis Mr. B. was almost exclusively preoccupied with the past, whereas my attempts to look at his current state were rejected. For instance, he described in minute detail the ups and downs of the share prices in 2001, the failures of his father, the unjustified criticism by a former course leader, the refusal to acknowledge a previous exam. When he filled the sessions with such monotonous accusations he seemed difficult to reach. I often felt tired, hopeless or annoyed, while my futile efforts to establish emotional contact were ignored with charitable negligence. For Mr. B. it was clear that this treatment came 'too late' and that his misery was *not* my fault.

Many months passed in this tug of war. While I was trying to bring him into the "here and now", he kept ignoring my interpretations and drew me back into the "there and then" (O'Shaughnessy 2013). I could sense a powerful grievance and rage. The only 'solution', the only form of 'reparation' he could imagine, he said, was a return to the state prior to the loss of his fortune and the failure of his studies. As he well knew that I would not be able to bring about this state, my interpretations were experienced as irrelevant or taunts, which left me with feelings of

rejection and anger. In particular, when he presented his father as simple, lazy and useless, I was more than once provoked into getting carried away pointing out that he was unbearably arrogant. Such 'rebuke', as he called it, hurt him, but he did not let on.

The retreat to an inaccessible island

Nevertheless his condition stabilised after about two years and he tried to rebuild his fortune by skilful financial investments. He continued to refuse to seek regular employment and experienced it as a 'punishment of fate to have such incompetent parents as his'. On the surface of it I was excluded from this accusation, but experienced myself as unable and unsuccessful in relation to the patient. Repeatedly, Mr. B. let me know that he experienced 'relationships with people' as disappointing and it seemed clear to me that the relationship with me could only be another disappointment.

At a time, when the conflicts with his parents were coming to a head, he contemptuously said that he wanted 'no more to do with this world'.

Then he created the picture of a desolate island, onto which he had retreated and from which he kept people off with a large sign 'No trespassers'. From this island, he was going to follow the worldwide stock exchanges in the hope of reconstructing his former wealth through clever investments and thus be able to live a life of independence and abundance. While no one was allowed to come close to the island, I was permitted to land from time to time in a small boat to bring him provisions. But even I was not permitted access to the 'darker areas' inside the island.

To me this picture seemed as much imaginative as provocative. While I was trying to interpret his self-righteous wrath, he made me feel that I did indeed not have access to these 'darker areas' in his internal world. A kind of helplessness spread in me, which went as far as catching myself one day carefully checking the share prices in the mad hope that if they rose, my patient would get better

It seemed that I had lost the confidence in my work and instead had become identified with his omnipotent belief system. I thought the 'provisions' I was allowed to deliver to the island were upholding the status quo without finding real access to his internal world.

Emerging from the retreat and moving back into it

There were times, however, when a better contact developed. When he once again began a session by saying 'In the year 2000...', and I expected him to continue with his usual complaints about his father's failure, he continued by saying 'In 2000 I would not have understood your interpretations'. To my surprise he added, if he understood me correctly, his greatest problem was his attitude of all or nothing and thus he was his worst enemy. And after a short pause he let me know that he was invited to visit friends in Switzerland who organised white water rafting tours for tourists with expert guides from New Zealand.

I had the impression that this expressed an appetite for life and said that he was considering trusting my guidance in moving of his desolate island into rough waters.

He responded that someone who has never had the experience of failure like me would probably never understand him and immediately I had the impression that I was being given another lesson on failure and misunderstanding.

For Mr. B., of course, it was difficult to feel understood by me. From his point of view I was in an ideal position, equipped with all the attributes he longed for; money, prestige, academic achievement and a family. This made him envious, and although he acknowledged my 'analyses' as 'correct', he was insistent that I could never empathise with him.

Insofar, Mr. B. 'understood' my interpretations, but could not really take them in and make use of them. His problem was his lacking capacity for *reparation*. Instead of acknowledging the damage he inflicted on others, he was preoccupied with the injustice done to him. Thus he projected his wish for reparation and demanded reparation for what was rightfully his and was unjustly kept from him, in particular, money, success and respect for his person. For this reason, reparation meant *concrete restitution* rather than making amends.

Thus Mr. B. experienced life and his analysis as a constant humiliation. He despised dependency and sought to recreate an illusory state in which everything belonged to him and he was not dependent on anyone. He *tolerated* treatment on his solitary island as long as this provided food for his illusions and his campaign of revenge. However, he seemed to reject analysis, whenever it was likely to get him in touch with the reality of mourning and loss.

Wrath – the impossibility of reparation

In this hopeless situation, time passed by without any prospect of change. It became increasingly clear how much Mr B. was dominated by a cruel super-ego, which either forced him into a stance of moral superiority or absolute obedience. He claimed the higher moral values for himself and thus justified his withdrawal from other people, not without regretting not having been able to have a relationship with a woman.

Feelings of humiliation could quickly flip into states of rage and wrath, where he looked down on other people. He complained endlessly about the 'stupidity' of his parents and their numerous shortfalls. He could spend whole sessions in disdain about his mother, who had used a fork in a Teflon frying pan despite his 'warnings' and his father, who had no table manners, drove like an idiot, did not use his hearing aid and generally did not follow his advice and 'instructions'. And this was why he had stopped talking to him. Talking like this his voice grew louder and louder. He escalated himself into an excited rage, described his parents as 'hopeless cases' and asked himself how much longer he would be 'patient with them'.

In turn, I increasingly experienced him as a hopeless case and sometimes lost patience with him. He indulgently ignored my attempts to interpret his accusations as directed towards me. If he experienced my comments as criticism he either submitted obediently or stopped talking to me and at times this led to loud confrontations in which I found myself carried away into reproaching him.

In the case of the scratched Teflon pan, he had accused his mother of 'poisoning' the food, while I accused him of not wanting to see that he was poisoning other people's food with his angry accusations.

There followed a long silence until he got back into his reproachful and hurt manner of talking about his mother's misdemeanours. I interpreted that he had experienced my comment as a sharp fork, which had scratched his thin internal protective layer and thus poisoned his food.

Although he seemed to experience this interpretation as far-fetched, he listened carefully. In a more lively and engaged way he protested against my view of his moral superiority by saying that he had a right to think like this. But then his protest flipped into indignation and he declared: "Because of my failures and unjust humiliations, I have developed a strict moral code. And if you think that I have an attitude of moral superiority or

you think that an attitude of 'laissez faire' towards my parents would be a better solution, I am definitely of a different opinion."

This indignation could rapidly flip into wrath and then his contempt and hatred assumed self-destructive proportions. In wrath, reparation can only be thought of as *mercy* and this is exactly why it makes the idea of reconciliation nearly impossible. In this state of mind, the patient seemed to prefer "to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 1, 263).

Thus the therapy had to be conducted in this 'hell'. And why should I be spared from going through this hell with him? In the transference I seemed either identified with the contemptible parents or with a vengeful super-ego, with him imagining that *I* felt in possession of higher moral standards in my omnipotent belief that *I* could change him. Evidently I had to admit my own failure to understand him, before I could take in some of his desperate isolation. After his self-righteous moral declaration, he felt alone and let me know after a long weekend that he felt worse without the sessions. On this occasion a more desperate sadness and clinginess became apparent that was absent previously.

On the threshold to the depressive position - despair and retreat

Nevertheless the conflict with the parents escalated when they accepted an invitation to a wedding abroad. He had declined to accompany them and despised them for having accepted that the relatives paid for their travel costs. With 'absolute obedience' he drove the parents to the airport, but did not speak a word or even look at them.. At home he unplugged the phone so that they could not contact him. He wanted them to remain in doubt about his wellbeing, while suicidal fantasies and projections of guilt dominated his ideation..

This situation was mirrored in the treatment by his 'advise to anyone' *not* to contact him. He said that he was on 'the path to self destruction' once again, that 'the coldness inside' himself was coming to a head and that he could do to himself what others had done to him previously.

I interpreted that here too he had unplugged, sent me warning signals and let me know that nobody could prevent him doing harm to himself.

He reacted with angry bouts of rage, saying that he was pleased that his parents were away. He claimed to be the only person who could help himself by rebuilding his fortune. Otherwise life was meaningless for him.

I suggested that he regarded my endeavours as pretty useless, felt terribly lonely and doubted that anyone could understand his despair. As I said this, I had little hope of being able to reach him and was close to giving up.

It was at moments like this that Mr. B. occasionally got into a state of deep sadness. Then his superiority and wrath collapsed and he became completely desperate and helpless. I feared that he would harm himself at the point of relinquishing his destructive system and said that he attempted to hold himself together by sustaining his grievance, so as not to be overwhelmed by sadness, dependency and guilt. He replied that he agreed with my 'analysis', but *just could not forgive*".

Much to my surprise, he told me in the last session before the Christmas break that he had replied to Christmas cards for the first time in years and was planning to visit friends. After he had said his good-byes and wished me a good Christmas, he turned round and said with tears in his eyes: "And thank you very much for being always here for me in the past year!"

Such moments could be very moving and gave a glimpse of a capacity for gratitude, which had been hidden for a long time. Mr. B. worried that he might not be able to finance the four times weekly sessions once the health insurance stopped paying, although I had indicated that I was prepared to make financial accommodations for him. He wanted to know whether he was allowed to return to the analysis at a later date and whether I was prepared to have him back and he announced that if he were to make money on the stock exchange, he would invest it in his analysis. His mother had said to him he should not worry so much about his future and he had begun to talk more with his father.

These movements made me feel hopeful, but could easily be obscured when humiliation and shame predominated. At such times, his accusations and wrath grew to monstrous proportions and he retreated into his rage-filled defensive system, where he 'ordered about' his parents about like unruly children and wished them dead. At such times, he spoke of his three 'basic premises' for any kind of possible change. Firstly, he had to get back his lost fortune, secondly, *others* were the guilty ones and *they had to change first*, and thirdly, the clock had to be turned back and the bad experiences of his childhood had to be undone.

5. Conclusions

Mr. B.'s three anti-therapeutic 'basic premises' illustrate the foundation of his defensive system and his almost psychotic misrepresentation of reality. Because of his professional failure and the demeaning experiences of his childhood he felt humiliated and demanded that others take responsibility for this. The persistence of his grievance and the omnipotence of his wrath made any attempt at reparation for a long time nearly impossible. His way of dealing with a primitive super-ego was to identify with its ideal, omnipotent aspects as well as its cruel and persecutory ones. In this way he felt superior to his parents and seemed entitled to look down on them and to humiliate them. In this context R. Money-Kyrle (1962, p. 384) wrote of an envious usurping of the super-ego by the ego.

In the analysis both aspects of his super-ego were projected into me so that I was either an ideal object who constantly evoked his envy, or a cruel object who demanded 'absolute obedience', put him down and relentlessly rebuked him with 'sharp criticism'.

For a long time there seemed to be no way out of this situation and I felt the need to resist my own sense of failure and disappointment. Then I would put the blame on him and demand that *he* change, and insofar seemed identified with my patient in dealing with my failure by projecting it into him. In doing so we got into a situation *where each demanded that the other change*, a dead end which facilitated the thriving of grievance and feelings of revenge, but made reparation very difficult.

In her 1958 paper, Melanie Klein points out that ego and super-ego can only change *collectively*.² That means changes in the ego functions can take place when the super-ego relinquishes some of its cruelty and omnipotence. Only then guilt feelings become more bearable and a process of reparation can begin. Again I would like to quote Klein:

'At this stage the injured object is no longer predominantly felt as a persecutor, but as a loved object towards whom a feeling of guilt and the urge to make reparation are experienced' (Klein 1958, p. 241-242).

In other words, it is the transformation of the super-ego from a pathological organisation into a helpful entity, which limits the ego but also encourages it to come to terms with its worst anxieties by 'maintaining the good object' (Klein). In Mr. B.'s case such endeavours of

² Somewhat different from Ron Britton in his essay „Emancipation from the super-ego“ (Britton 2003).

reparation became observable when his mood became more mournful and he felt helpless.

However, such movements could trigger a degree of despair that I feared he could harm or kill himself, as if he could only survive by holding on to his grievance and wrath. I think at those moments like this Mr. B. approached the threshold of the depressive position, but retreated into his defensive system when the emerging anxieties and feelings of guilt became unbearable.

I think of described *grievance* as a state in which the wounds are kept open and the wish for reparation is projected into an object whose every wish for reparation will be denied (Weiss 2008). On the other hand, in his *wrath* Mr. B. seemed identified with a morally superior position. At times he felt like a god that the world was not good enough to deserve his love. In such a position, reparation is only possible in the form of *mercy*.

Both states of mind, *grievance and wrath*, render the processing of guilt very difficult. Instead of enabling reparation, they trigger feelings of humiliation and contrition or nourish feelings of revenge, thus perpetuating the damage to the internal objects. Mr B. was well able to see this vicious cycle and even agreed with my 'analyses', but added that he just could not forgive.

I believe though, that genuine *understanding* is bound up with the possibility of reparation. While humiliation and shame require *immediate relief* (Steiner 2006), reparation requires *time*, time to acknowledge transience and loss. And it is exactly that experience that Mr. B. tried to avoid by withdrawing to a timeless state of mind. The only possibility of reparation, as he put it in his third 'premise', was the reversal of time, a return to paradise.

When the path to reparation fails, the compulsion to repeat takes over, maybe not just in the individual mind, but also in certain social and historical developments. In this way, Mr. B.'s third premise appears like a backward looking historic utopia (Weiss 2010).

I would like to conclude with a thought by R. Money-Kyrle (1956) in his early paper on counter-transference, where he says that by projecting his internal objects into the analyst the patient comes to stand for the analyst's own damaged internal objects. In his view true understanding goes along with the *analyst's* capacity for reparation. In Mr. B's analysis I'd reached more than once a point where I'd lost all hope for

development and change.. Then I projected my helplessness back into him and held him responsible for my failing.

Only in those moments when I had to acknowledge my limits to tolerate and understand, it became possible for Mr B. to admit to himself, how lonely and desperate he actually felt. It seemed, as though both analyst and patient had to experience the collapse of their omnipotence in order to recognise the limits of what is achievable and devise realistic goals (Steiner 2011).

In the case of Mr. B. that meant, as he once put it, that the 'breaking waves' against his lonely island were getting softer and he could ask me whether he might be able to return. I think that this question contained an expression of his uncertainty as to whether I would be able to forgive him. In his paper on reparation H. Rey (1986) suggests that the development of a capacity to forgive is in turn linked to the possibility of being able to imagine *to be forgiven*. In this sense, I think, the analysis of Mr. B. could not solve his problems, but might at least have helped him to live with them.

(Translated by Ursula Haug, London, and Kristin White, Berlin)

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